




PLAYS OF  
**SHAKESPEARE**  
EDITED  
WITH INTRODUCTIONS & NOTES  
BY  
G. S. GORDON

**A MIDSUMMER  
NIGHT'S DREAM**

OXFORD  
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS



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BY

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AS YOU LIKE IT

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# SHAKESPEARE'S

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## PREFACE

IT is a common complaint against editors of Shakespeare that they exceed their part; that by doing too much for their author they gain readers for themselves at his expense. In preparing this edition I have tried always to remember that it is better for an editor to say too little than too much, and that the first aim of an editor of Shakespeare should be to gain readers for Shakespeare. The Notes, therefore, are concerned about one thing only, the meaning of the text. Everything which seemed in any degree to need explanation has been explained, and care has been taken to explain nothing else.

The Introductions are written with more freedom. They are full, and so far as they have a common spirit it is a spirit of inquiry. No question of history or criticism has been treated dogmatically when it could be treated otherwise. There is indeed no part of literary history where dogma is less in place.

It is impossible for any editor of Shakespeare to write a preface without remembering his debts. There are parts of these Introductions where I am conscious of no obligation, but wherever scholarship or learning or interpretation was needed I have found my best guides in the eighteenth-century editors, in Dr. Aldis Wright, and in the *Oxford Dictionary*.

G. S. G.

OXFORD

May 1, 1912



# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

## INTRODUCTION

### SOURCES OF THE PLAY : THE FAIRIES AND CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

To talk solemnly of the sources of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, as if it were derived from something stated and precise, is to fall into the sin of formality. In the sense in which most of Shakespeare's plays are said to have a source, as being founded on some known story or chronicle, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* has no source at all. The story or plot of the play is the least thing in it, and may have come from anywhere. It is at best an excuse for other things, for poetry, fancy, and foolery : for a display of the vagaries of lovers, the whims of fairies, and the follies of clowns. The play, indeed, is not so much a play with a plot as a series of variations upon a central theme, the theme of Love, Youth, and Fantasy, the agents and contrivers of these variations being an airy and diminutive race which lives in the fancy of men, to whom the earthy humours of Bottom and his company are offered as a counterpoise, lest too much airiness make the play light.

To ask, then, for the sources of such a play is as much as to ask for a history of Shakespeare's literary youth. The play is an extravaganza, into which all the lighter riches of his youth are poured. In the collection of these riches, if he contracted any debts, they were mainly to himself ; in all such matters he was his own chief creditor. The traditionary mythology of the Fairies he learned in his boyhood, and enriched in his later youth with the fancies of the poets ; the language of Love, which shines in a kind of moonlight through the play, was neither new nor difficult to the author of the *Venus and Adonis* and the *Sonnets* ; the stories and myths of the Ancients were the studies of his early manhood, and, after life itself, the chief nourishment in those days of his imagina-

Nature of  
the Play.

Its source  
in Shake-  
speare's  
youth.

tion. Last of all, to come back to native earth, the merry and tragical humours of village actors, and the learning of the tiring-room on which Bottom had raised himself to a proud supremacy among his fellows, were nothing if not familiar to one who had lived from birth to manhood in the county of Warwick and had spent the last eight or nine years of his life as an actor and playwright in London.

Elves and  
Fairies.

With this general proviso we may proceed to consider some questions of source which are both pertinent and interesting. The chief agents and best drawn personages in the play are the Fairies. But they are not ordinary fairies. No rustic gossip of Warwickshire or of any other county ever conceived for them so courtly and royal a government as they enjoy in this play. Shakespeare, not out of pure invention, but adding his own fancy to poetical precedent, has blended the tiny and wily simplicity of the village elf with the mediæval courtliness of the fays or fairies of romance. 'His Fairies,' says Keightley, in his charming book on fairy mythology, 'agree with the former in their diminutive stature,—diminished, indeed, to dimensions inappreciable to village gossips,—in their fondness for dancing, their love of cleanliness, and their child-abstracting propensities. Like the fays, they form a community, ruled over by the princely Oberon and the fair Titania. There is a court and chivalry; Oberon would have the Queen's sweet changeling to be a "Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild." Like earthly monarchs he had his jester, the "shrewd and knavish sprite call'd Robin Goodfellow."'

Fairies in  
Eliza-  
bethan  
Poetry.

The first and homely race of fairies was known to Shakespeare from the traditions of the people; the second from the traditions of the poets. 'Fairies in his time,' says Dr. Johnson, 'were much in fashion; common tradition had made them familiar; and Spenser's poem had made them great.' He does not add, what puzzles every child who follows these adventures, that Spenser's poem makes them tall. The Fairy Knights of the *Faerie Queene* are the best-grown men of their day. They have nothing of the fairy about them, in our familiar sense of fairy, except as they live in Fairyland; and the Fairyland in which they live is not so much the land of fairies as the land of romance in general. Oberon, who

first appears in his royal character in the old French romance of *Huon of Bordeaux*, is king of the Fairies in Spenser as in Oberon. Shakespeare; and from Spenser's poem he may have passed into Shakespeare's play. But how unlike the King Oberon of the poem is to the King Oberon of the play may be seen from the tenth canto of the second book, where he is made the representative in allegory of the portliest and mightiest of English monarchs, King Henry VIII. Indeed, if our object be to find in the English poetry of that time a system of fairy empire resembling Shakespeare's, the poet to consult is not Spenser, but Drayton. Spenser's fairies are fays; Drayton's, like Shakespeare's, are fairies and fays in one. In his delightful *Nymphidia*, which Shakespeare might have written with pleasure, the conjunction of diminutiveness and majesty is managed with a delicate art and a perfect attention to scale which many who never read the poem have thought peculiar to Shakespeare's play.

The resemblance goes further. Neither Drayton nor Shakespeare was able to dispense with Puck. Puck is the very elf of village stories, and is presented by both in his proper character, unspoiled by the manners of courts or the ideas of chivalry. To the dapper courtiers who wait upon Titania he is a 'lob of spirits' (II. i. 16). While they are about their boudoir work of hanging pearls in cowslips' ears he is frightening the maidens of the villagery, curdling milk, and upsetting grandams. He likes a rough frolic, and to be 'fear'd in field and town' is the breath of life to him. When he is challenged by Titania's fairy (II. i. 32 f.), and confronted with his title of Hobgoblin and the list of his misdeeds, he is so far from being abashed that he adds to the list in a style of homespun dialect deliberately calculated to offend a courtier's ear. Throughout the poem and the play alike he is Oberon's man. Oberon has a value for him, and puts his shrewdness and knavery to good account. In both poem and play he is appointed to keep an eye upon Titania, of whose fidelity Oberon seems rarely sure; and to make his position at a king's court more natural Shakespeare has given him the post of jester. 'I jest to Oberon and make him smile,' he tells the pearl-hanging fairy, with becoming pride.



Queen  
Mab to  
Titania.

Oberon, we saw, had been king of the Fairies among all good romancers for many years before Shakespeare. Titania, on the other hand, is almost a new creation ; and not merely, as one is apt to think, Queen Mab with a new classical name in the place of her old English one. The queen of the Fairies is Queen Mab in Drayton, and elsewhere in Shakespeare. How he came to think of Titania is stated by Keightley. 'It was the belief of those days,' he writes, 'that the Fairies were the same as the classic nymphs, the attendants of Diana'; and he quotes from King James I, who calls these nymphs, in his *Daemonologie*, 'that fourth kind of spirits, quihilk be the gentilis was called Diana, and her wandering court, and amongst us called *Phairie*.' The queen of the Fairies, on this system, becomes the same as Diana ; and Diana, as Keightley points out, is by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (iii. 173) styled Titania.

Why  
Titania ?

This is a long process towards baptism, and sets us wondering why Shakespeare, who is not usually so painstaking about his names, should have travelled so far for this name. One reason at least he had, sufficient to account for all his travel. He wished to accommodate his fairies to the scene of the play by giving their queen a classical name ; Queen Mab in the palace wood at Athens seemed incongruous even to so free a dramatist as Shakespeare. What he sought he partly found in the legend of Diana as queen of Fairies ; but he was still in difficulty about a name. To call a married queen Diana would have been, if anything, more incongruous still, for Diana was the very type and head of virginity. He had still to discover, among the various names by which Diana was known, some one less alien to wedlock. This he looked for and found in the mythologist Ovid, and was happy to call her, after Ovid's example, by a name so well sounding and so suitable to verse as Titania.

Shake-  
speare and  
Chaucer.

It was the opinion of Tyrwhitt, the editor of Chaucer, that 'the true progenitors of Shakespeare's Oberon and Titania' were Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*. What put him upon this idea I do not know, but it is possible to guess. He not only thought that a resemblance was visible between the personages named ; he must have thought it likely in itself that

Shakespeare had read this Tale. Let us consider the second supposition first. It raises another question of source which will not detain us long, and may as well be answered now.

Three of the names in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Theseus, Hippolyta, and Philostrate, are to be found in another Tale of Chaucer's, the *Knight's Tale*. It is a tale of the rival love of two brothers, Palamon and Arcite, for Emily, the sister-in-law of Theseus; and Philostrate is the name which Arcite assumed when he came to Theseus's court in disguise. Tyrwhitt may have reasoned that since Shakespeare about this time read the *Knight's Tale*, he may well have gone further and read the *Merchant's Tale* also. To this it might be answered that such reasoning is very unsafely applied to so unmethodical a reader as Shakespeare, who must have turned over a hundred books for one that he stopped to read, and dipped into as many more for one that he read through. But it is enough to show that, for anything we can see, he need not have read even the *Knight's Tale*. If names were his object (and there is nothing in common between the play and the *Tale* but these three names), he had them all at hand in North's translation of the *Lives* of Plutarch, one of the few books which he thought it worth while to read through and master. All the Greek names of the play are there, in the *Life of Theseus*: Duke Theseus himself and Hippolyta, Egeus, Lysander, Demetrius, and Philostrate. We conclude from this, that while Shakespeare must have consulted Plutarch's *Theseus* for his play, for anything that we can yet see he need not have looked into Chaucer at all.

Story of  
Theseus in  
Chaucer  
and  
Plutarch.

Tyrwhitt's suggestion, then, that Oberon and Titania were drawn from Chaucer's Pluto and Proserpine, must rest upon resemblance alone. To a reader acquainted only with the classical mythology, the suggestion may seem at first sight improbable and absurd; for Pluto in classical mythology is the king of Hades, the land of shades and departed spirits, and Proserpine is his unwilling wife. In Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, however, Pluto appears strangely as the king, and Proserpine as the queen of the Fairies. He is grisly Pluto no more, and Proserpine has forgotten to be sad. She dances and sings under a tree, and is as happy as a fairy born. How they came to change with such apparent

Chaucer's  
Pluto and  
Proser-  
pine.



Compared  
with  
Oberon  
and  
Titania.

completeness both their natures and their functions it would be difficult to determine. The Middle Ages played many strange pranks with the dignified business of classical mythology. But what, I imagine, must have struck Tyrwhitt as he contemplated the queen of Shades dancing on earth as queen of Fairies was this, that Oberon, Shakespeare's king of Fairies, is deliberately styled, if not the king of Shades, at any rate the 'king of shadows' (III. ii. 347). His subjects are called 'shadows' in Puck's speech at the end of the play (v. ii. 54). They 'follow darkness like a dream'. This does look, it must be confessed, as if Shakespeare had had some memory of a fairy Pluto when he wrote his play; and where was he so likely to come upon him as in the *Merchant's Tale* of Chaucer?

Titania's  
name  
again.

It is possible that Tyrwhitt merely guessed, and did not work it out. If he had worked it out, he might have come upon a better and more interesting explanation of these 'shadow' phrases in the play. I may remind the reader of the unusual trouble which Shakespeare took to find a new name for his Fairy queen. He came upon a legend that the queen of the Fairies in ancient times had been Diana; and he seized at once on her name of Titania for his purpose. One reason for this has been already suggested. But he had a further and less obvious reason, which is the pith of our argument. He wished to make play with Diana in her other characters.

The Fairy  
System in  
*M. N. D.*

Diana the huntress-goddess was also, as Shakespeare very well knew,<sup>1</sup> goddess of the moon, in her title of Phoebe, and in her title of Hecate, goddess of the underworld, the world of shades. She is mentioned in her three characters in the play. She is 'the triple Hecate' of v. ii. 14;<sup>2</sup> it is her team that the fairies follow as they run from the presence of the sun, 'following darkness like a dream' (v. ii. 13-16). The queen of the Fairies, who is on earth Titania or Diana, and haunts the woods with her forester husband, Oberon,<sup>3</sup> is by symbol the queen of the moon in Heaven, and the queen of the Shades in

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *As You Like It*, III. ii. 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> See the note on this line.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. II. i. 25; III. ii. 390. Also 1 *Henry IV*, I. ii. 28-30.

Hades. It is the moon in the darkness which the Fairies follow like a dream, shunning the sun. Their life is spent in the regions of darkness and moonlight under the guidance of their queen, who as Phoebe and Hecate commands both light and shade. They follow the darkness across the world. When the sun sets in the west they come riding behind her chariot from the east. A moment before he entered the wood at Athens, Oberon the huntsman was on 'the furthest steppe of India' (II. i. 69). Titania speaks with affection of 'the spiced Indian air', and of her gossips on the yellow Indian sands (II. i. 124 f.). Everywhere in the play these fairy conditions are observed. When 'the iron tongue of midnight' speaks, 'tis almost fairy time,' says Theseus (v. ii. 372-3); and as the lovers and revellers depart to bed, Puck comes in to herald the fairies and explain their coming. At the first entrance of Oberon and Titania, in his first words of greeting, Oberon speaks of moonlight as we should speak of day; and the play is bathed in moonlight, from the first scene to the last. It lights the lovers to their meetings, the craftsmen to their hawthorn brake, and the fairies to their tasks and pleasures.

This is the scheme of fairy mythology which Shakespeare planned, by a skilful extension and adaptation of ideas already old. That it is related to the scheme which put Pluto and Proserpine in the throne of the Fairies cannot be doubted; but how the relation came about, or how it affected Shakespeare, if it affected him at all, could not easily be made out. Chaucer's Pluto and Proserpine may have set him thinking: he had all his life a fondness for the speculations of mythology. But it is probable that he reached his finished conception of the fairy world, not by way of Pluto and Proserpine, but by way of Diana, the 'triple Hecate'.

Many a reader may be inclined to think that Shakespeare has here been credited with a science of mythology beyond his reach. It is enough to assure them that the poetical mythologists of his time would not have shared their opinion. Neither Drayton, the student of folklore, nor Milton, the student of the classics, disdained to borrow from Shakespeare's mythology what they wanted for their poems. How much Drayton in his *Nymphidia*

Where  
it came  
from.

Studied  
by Dray-  
ton and  
Milton.

owed to this play a glance at his poem will disclose ; Milton's debt, though less obvious and more subtly acquired, was vastly greater. In his *L'Allegro*, his *Comus*, and his *Il Penseroso* you may track Shakespeare everywhere, in words, lines, images, and ideas. Two plays above all caught his fancy, and dictated his early harmonies : *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. He loved them for their elves and fairies, their spritely magic, their tripping melodies, and their shifting colours of nature. He has even, the critics say, been enticed by Shakespeare into the last frailty that we should look for in Milton, an error in mythology.<sup>1</sup>

Shake-  
speare and  
Classical  
Mytho-  
logy.

Shakespeare, with ready insight, early perceived the advantages which mythology offered to one whose only Alma Mater was his mother wit. With chronology, geography, and such branches of learning, in which he was never strong, mythology in itself has nothing to do. A man may be a good mythologist and yet be ignorant of all that is taught in the schools ; for a good myth, like a good fairy-tale, is superior to time and place, and if transplanted and cared for, will blossom anywhere in any age. This is why Ovid's *Metamorphoses* became the manual of poets and romancers in Europe for centuries. His stories, though they were the stories of Greek and Roman mythology, were everywhere at home. To feel and understand them a man need know nothing of either Greeks or Romans : all that was wanted was wits and some gift of fancy. The ordinary stories could be learned without reading a line, from pictures and the painted hangings which then hung in all good houses. For the rest, one need not, by Shakespeare's day, know any language but one's own. Ovid's stories and images were the stock-in-trade of every aspiring poet who boasted acquaintance with the classics, and, besides, there was a translation to make all easy.

Golding's  
*Ovid*  
(1565-7).

Arthur Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, which was published in parts between 1565 and 1567, was by every sign a favourite book with Shakespeare all his life. He used

<sup>1</sup> 'While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke Gently o'er th' accustomed oak' (*Il Penseroso*, ll. 59, 60). He is thought to have had in mind the 'night's swift dragons' of *III. ii.* 379. But mythologists declare that only Ceres had a dragon yoke.

it in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, which he wrote before he was thirty; he used it in *The Tempest*, nearly twenty years later, when the stage and he were parting company. In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, it must be confessed, he has made no great effort, to impart to the speeches of his Athenians a Grecian air. He resorts, therefore, to images of classical mythology less often than might have been expected. His journey in search of Titania, which brought him to the meeting-point of fairy and classical legend, seems to have cooled his desire for adventure in these southern lands. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe (though his language shows that he had read it in Golding) he must have known well from his acquaintance with the stage; passages like that in *I. i.* 169 f., where Cupid's arrows are distinguished, may be found in every other sonnet of the time; and the list of pieces offered to Duke Theseus (*v. i.* 44 f.) is a perfunctory attempt to make classical colour at small expense. There is only one passage in the play (but it is one of the finest) which can be compared with those mythological pictures at the opening of the Fifth Act of *The Merchant of Venice*, where painting and poetry go hand in hand: the hunting of the hounds in *iv. i.* 111 f. The poetry of this passage is Shakespeare's; the ground of it is the description of Actæon's hounds in Golding's translation of the third book of the *Metamorphoses*.

How used  
by Shake-  
speare.

The sense and feeling which Shakespeare everywhere displays for classical mythology was a constant source of wonder to his earlier critics, who thought that no man who was not a classical scholar could so have rendered to the life the legends of the Ancients. Keats has since taught us how it may be done; and that wonder has ceased to trouble. It will happen, of course, to such poets, luxuriating in the freedom of mythology from the petty accuracies of time, to confuse dates and confound chronologies. These confusions and confoundings are what critics call Anachronisms. How Shakespeare's anachronisms should be understood, and how irrelevant they are to the truth of poetry and imagination, it will be our business to disclose in some part of the next section.

Shake-  
speare  
and  
Keats.



## CONSTRUCTION AND DESIGN

Plays and  
Plots.

It used to be said, in the days when literature had its laws and legislators, that every play must stand or fall by its plot; that the plot was the 'soul' of a play. This was the creed of critics many centuries before Shakespeare, and, in spite of some protests, it continued to be their creed for nearly a century after his death. To be 'a good plotter', as the phrase went, was the first merit of a dramatist; passion, humour, fancy, wit were qualities rather to be hoped for than demanded, and anyhow a good plotter could not fail to be good at other things as well. On this theory the best English dramatist was Ben Jonson, and so he was accounted by many, long after Shakespeare and he had written their last plays. When critics are as obstinate as this, the only remedy is Time. It was found, as the years passed, that Shakespeare's plays lived while Ben Jonson's died; and sensible men (reflecting that the 'soul' of a thing is that which gives it life and may make it immortal) began to ask themselves how it could any longer be maintained that the 'soul' of a play was its plot, since Ben Jonson's plays, which had so much of this 'soul', were dying, and Shakespeare's, which had so little, seemed immortal. In this way, by the course of time, that fallacy was killed which had enabled one critic to call *Othello* a 'bloody farce', and one playgoer to call *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* the 'most insipid ridiculous play' that ever he saw in his life.<sup>1</sup>

Plot distinguished  
from Construction.

What Mr. Pepys and his friends most valued in a play was a well-contrived ingenious plot, with surprises in it, after the manner of the Spanish romances. To such playgoers *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was bound to appear insipid; for no play was ever less dependent for success upon its plot. It is, as we observed already, not so much a play with a plot as a series of variations upon a central theme, the theme of love and fantasy. The plot of the four lovers is in itself no more than a fairy tale; and the fairy tale became a play only because the fairies were at hand to make it one. Let us abandon, then, in what follows, the language

<sup>1</sup> The critic was Mr. Rymer, in his *Short View of Tragedy* (1693); the playgoer was Mr. Pepys (*Diary*, Sept. 29, 1662).



f plots, and talk some other language less alien to Shakespeare's practice and intentions. The old error is by no means rooted out. We are still too much inclined to talk of the 'plot' of a play when we should be talking of its 'construction'. The two things may be very different. Shakespeare's plays, if considered as exercises in plot-making, are mostly failures; if considered as exercises in dramatic construction, they are, with all their generous faults, productions of the highest genius. To study Shakespeare's plots is to study the last thing in his plays that he cared for. To study the construction of his plays is to study one of the chief means at his disposal for producing that total impression which he cared for most.

The construction of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is as skilful as the plot is slight. Given lovers and fairies, the problem was to find some reasonable excuse for bringing them together. It was necessary to attach their adventures to some established occasion or event, and to connect them by such ties of time and place as should seem natural and convincing. Where all was whimsy and nothing remained the same, some stable centre of equilibrium was wanted. This established occasion, this centre of equilibrium, was supplied by the nuptials of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, who preside, however remotely, over all the doings of their subjects. The play opens with their stately love-talk, and their longings for the death of the old moon and the birth of the new. All Athens, we hear, is in festival for Theseus's victory and his approaching marriage; and all Athens waits, like its Duke, for the new moon. Thus, in Shakespeare's manner, the chief chord of the harmony of the play is passionately sounded in the first words spoken. Love and moonlight, festival and marriage, are the stated elements of the play; everything that follows is a kind of improvisation which weaves them together.

Theseus and Hippolyta, as presidents of the play, give a date to all its occurrences. Everything turns on the day of their marriage. This is what brings Oberon from India to Athens on that night of all nights in the year, as jealous Titania is careful to remind him (II. i. 68-73). He has a liking for Hippolyta. This is what brings Titania too: she has no liking at all for Hippolyta, but,

Construction and Theme of *M. N. D.*

The Presidents of the play.

if the retort of a provoked husband is to be believed, she takes a more than common interest in Theseus, having helped him in love-affairs before. Whatever their private motives, their purpose is the same (*ibid.* ll. 74-80). Each has come, with a train of fairies, to bless the marriage. They settle in the palace wood (by Quince's reckoning a mile, by Hermia's a league beyond the city), and are there awaiting the appointed day when the minor adventures which make up the play begin. The date of the ducal marriage equally determines the moment of the other and human occurrences of the play. This is what drives Bottom and his friends to rehearse interludes by moonlight. This is the reason of their sweating and conning of parts, when they should have been at work or in bed. They rehearse as loyal subjects of the duke what they may perform as simple artists at his marriage festival. The lovers are equally dependent. This, and this only, drives them to so precipitate a flight. This, and this only, sends them abroad on the very night that the fairies arrive. The date of the marriage is the date of their despair, for when the new moon rises and the marriage day comes, Hermia must choose either to wed Demetrius and reject Lysander, or to die or turn nun.

Having contrived that all the parties in the play should be in motion at one time, on the night of the new moon, and that all their action should revolve round one fixed and determined event, the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta, Shakespeare went further and concluded his scheme by contriving that all the parties should meet in one place. The two lovers escape to the palace wood, and are lost there; the other two go after, one to find them, the other to follow the finder. The fairies set up their court there as on their natural ground, for Oberon is a forester and Titania is not Diana's namesake for nothing. Bottom and his company go there for privacy, to be out of the way of their fellow-craftsmen in the city. Last of all, that no one may be omitted, there come to the wood Theseus and Hippolyta themselves, with Egeus the angry father in their train, to hunt and keep May morning. They make a fine show with their hounds and horns, and their arrival on the scene of adventure at the moment when all has

Their  
marriage  
dates  
every-  
thing.

Every-  
body  
meets in  
the palace  
wood.

been put right enables the dramatist to conclude the night's cross purposes on the very spot on which they had been displayed.

Throughout all the adventures of the play Theseus and Hippolyta are never quite forgotten. When the wits of young Athenian love are most shaken and its course least smooth, we remember, however faintly, the sanity and equability of theirs, and the rational certainty of its consummation. When all love whatsoever seems laughable and absurd in the palace wood, we recall, with a sense of correction, the stately pomp of love at the palace. Those who find fault with Theseus because he behaves like a country gentleman of title home from the wars, and with Hippolyta because she shares his tastes, cannot have thought much about their part in the play, nor had much acquaintance with military heroes in private life. 'Theseus, the associate of Hercules,' says Malone, 'is not engaged in any adventure worthy of his rank and reputation, nor is he in reality an agent throughout the play. Like King Henry VIII he goes out a-Maying. . . .' Why a soldier, whatever his associates, his rank, or his reputation, should be expected to do anything else but amuse himself quietly in his marriage week, after a fatiguing and victorious war, it is difficult to see. But the bookish man is always hardest upon his heroes. If his hero be a man of action, as he is likely to be, he must be always heroic and always adventuring; never sleep but in armour nor eat without a sword at his elbow; and so must pass without rest from encounter to encounter till he drop at last, dead as much of weariness as of wounds. Shakespeare is less exacting. He allows his heroes sometimes to rest and be natural. Theseus and Hippolyta are so perfectly at ease and so completely adequate to their functions that any heightening of effect either in their parts or in their characters must have disturbed the whole balance of the play.

The chief agents of the play, and its best drawn personages, are the fairies. Who they were, how they lived, and where they got their king and queen, has already been told in the last section. They take a hand in everything that goes on. Theseus may be Duke of Athens, but in his own palace wood, though he will not believe it, he is a mere vassal to the fairy king. Oberon has

Propriety  
of Theseus  
and  
Hippo-  
lyta.

Chief  
agents,  
the  
Fairies.

Oberon  
and Puck.

Bottom  
and  
Titania.

come for one express purpose, to give a fairy blessing to the marriage; but time hangs, and he must fill up the waiting interval. A whole night is to be spent, and he must still be doing. From the moment that they enter, he and Puck are seldom off the stage. Their entrances are frequently unmarked: they use their invisibility to come in and go out as they have a mind. Oberon's chance encounter with the lovers determines their fate; his jester's chance encounter with the weavers and bellows-menders partly determines Bottom's. To fill up the night, to give Puck and his master something more to do, to make use of such a paramour as Bottom, and to display more fully the graces of Titania and her court, Shakespeare even contrived an independent action within the fairy world itself: the dissension of its king and queen. Poor Bottom, the victim at once of Puck, of chance, and of his own conceit, falls in with Oberon's ruse upon the queen more happily even than the wit of Oberon had devised; and the wooing scenes which follow his 'translation' are, upon the stage at any rate, the very marrow of the play.<sup>1</sup> Bottom's position of momentary superiority to the company of Cobwebs and Peaseblossoms is employed by Shakespeare to point a moral peculiarly congenial to his mind: the comic effect of social distinctions upon the minds of common men. He treats his fairy attendants with the same mixture of familiarity and *hauteur* as he would have expected from his own superiors in human society. The dialogue which he conducts with them is one of the most amusing in the play, and we are not surprised to find that it was thought worthy of imitation.<sup>2</sup> In all these transactions, then, the fairies are the prime agents and connect everything. The pomps of Theseus's marriage are not too stately

<sup>1</sup> Drolleries were acted under Bottom's name when the regular theatres were closed by the Puritans; and after the Restoration, in 1661, we hear of a piece called 'The Merry Conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver,' which contains nothing but the fairies and the clowns.

<sup>2</sup> *Mopso.* I pray, sir, what may I call you?

*1st Fairy.* My name is Penny.

*Mopso.* I am sorry I cannot purse you.

*Frisco.* I pray you, sir, what might I call you?

*2nd Fairy.* My name is cricket.

*Frisco.* I would I were a chimney for your sake.

(*The Maid's Metamorphosis*: prd. 1600: anon.)



for their blessings, nor the rude mimicry of the hard-handed men of Athens too homely for their jests. They are everywhere with their charms, their songs, their dancing, and their laughter, and we should not know the play without them.

As the fairies are the chief agents of the action, so their victims, the four young lovers, are its playthings. They serve to exhibit the whimsicalities of love, and to bring in their enchanters. In themselves they have no interest. We find it difficult, after a lapse of time, to recall their names. They have names, because it is convenient that they should : but First and Second Lady, First and Second Gentleman, would convey as much, even to our recollections, as Hermia and Helena, Demetrius and Lysander. They are only lovers ; and have nothing to distinguish them from hundreds of other persons in hundreds of other plays but the primitive candour of their manners. They are, indeed, as Helena complains, far from civil. The men are selfish and inclined to be brutal ; the women are forward or fawning, and inclined to scratch. Helena's behaviour is doglike enough to excuse Demetrius's scorn, if not his language : it is to be hoped, however, that he did not kick her, as Helena seems to imply (III. ii. 225). When the troubles reach their height the two women are on the point of fighting, and the men look on as if they would not be surprised if they did.

It may be said by an apologist that the women are so because Shakespeare did not trouble to make them lifelike. But the truth is, that in their peculiar manner of conducting a controversy they are very like real women indeed, but women of a certain class. Nor can their behaviour be put down to enchantment. At the time of these occurrences the only one of the four who is enchanted is Lysander, whose extravagant abuse of Hermia may on that account be pardoned. It is, indeed, difficult to escape the conviction that in these scenes Shakespeare was irresponsible, and wished to make his audience laugh more than was good for it. The passage of arms between Hermia and Helena about their height (III. ii. 288 f.) cannot otherwise be understood. It is a ridiculous and unedifying scene : partly suggested, let us imagine, by the figure of some particular

The  
Manners  
of the  
Four  
Lovers.

Hermia  
and  
Helena.



actors in the company. Massinger took the scene in the right way when he parodied its climax almost literally in his *Duke of Milan*.<sup>1</sup>

Love,  
Fancy,  
and the  
Moon.

That such manners should co-exist with love is not, however, incredible. There is but little wanted to make a lover in the climate of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*: it is enough to be young and to have eyes. If any modern reader desire to know how 'fancy' in Elizabethan poetry came to mean love, let him read this play; and along with it, that song in the *Merchant of Venice* which the attendants sing while Bassanio reflects upon the caskets:

'Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head?

It is engender'd in the eyes,  
With gazing fed; and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies.'

Oberon knew this, when he set about curing the affections of the lovers in the wood. There was no need of surgery, no need of incision: a touch on their eyelids and all was done. Such love is the love of the prime, which comes as naturally as the mating of birds on St. Valentine's day. All the young people in the play are 'poor fancy's followers', and the course of their love, therefore, runs far from smooth. Hermia's head is full of the lore of love: she knows its statutes by book (i. i. 168 f.). These lovers, it is soon observed, make much use of the moon, but only as she is the concealer of love's flights. Of the moon as the patroness of single life they think singularly little; and of single life itself nothing at all. Barren celibacy is a wintry thing, unfit for the spring of youth. This is the text of Theseus's sermon to Hermia in the opening scene. He delivers it with the fervour natural in a man four days before his wedding, but not too fervently for the convictions of his younger hearers. The grandeur of perpetual virginity is not denied; but it is a thing too high,

<sup>1</sup> *Marcella*. For you, puppet—

*Mariana*. What of me, pine-tree?

... O that I could reach you!

The little one you scorn so, with her nails

Would tear your painted face, and scratch those eyes out.

(*Duke of Milan*: 1623: ii. i.)

a thing for queens. This is how Shakespeare accomplishes the difficult task of at once condemning virginity and praising its chief representative in England, Queen Elizabeth (II. i. 155 f.). To be a votaress, which in itself is a barren thing, becomes fine when the votaress is imperial.

The story of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* ends, as all stories of young love should end, 'like an old play': Jack hath Jill, and nought goes ill.<sup>1</sup> Theseus, who has a kind heart, and is not so selfishly happy as to be insensible to the happiness of others, takes all four lovers under his care, and has them married according to their desires, along with himself and Hippolyta. When the marriages are over and the day's feasting is done, when Pyramus and Thisbe have stabbed themselves with their scabbards, and only Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead, it is he who dismisses the play, in language as suitable to its conclusion as his first words were suitable to its opening: 'Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.' It is singular, indeed, how often Theseus says the right thing. His remark about the interlude of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is the sharpest sentence that has been made upon plays and acting: 'The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them' (v. i. 215-7). If we consider the difficulty of representing such a play as *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, we may be inclined to think that the work of amendment is better done at home. Stage moonlight and stage woodlands are dreary things, difficult for any but the youngest imagination to amend. What the stage does do for a reader is not to suggest a wood which he could not better imagine, but to remind him how literally true it is that the play is in a wood. What Quince said of his company might be said of all the players in the action: their stage is a green plot, and a hawthorn brake is their tiring-room. All this is best tasted when a man is by himself, and is more visible to the eye of the mind than of the body.

The  
Ending.

M. N. D.  
on the  
stage.

It is usual, in speaking of this play, to say something disparaging

<sup>1</sup> Cp. III. ii. 461-3; and *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. ii. 882-3:

'Our wooing doth not end like an old play;  
Jack hath not Jill.'

The  
Classical  
Setting of  
*M. N. D.*

or apologetic about its classical setting : to condemn its anachronisms, or explain them. Theseus and his court, it is generally allowed, have few of the marks of Greece about them but their names ; the four lovers, for all that their speech or manners can tell us about the country of their birth, might have been lost as well in the forest of Arden as in a wood of Attica ; and the company of Quince and Bottom do not pretend by so much as a name to be anything but pure bred English artisans, hailing from about the neighbourhood of Warwickshire. Some explain these things as a whim of Shakespeare's ; some say that he knew no better ; others are ready to show that in all that he did in this way Shakespeare proceeded on the strictest principles of philosophy. None of these explanations hits the truth. The truth is that Shakespeare followed tradition. He did what writers had been doing for centuries, in England and out of it : giving to every age and country the manners of their own. This was the method of the Middle Ages, which were much nearer to Shakespeare than we are inclined to remember. The popular idea, derived from descriptive headings in historical manuals, that when the spirit of the Renaissance came into England in the reign of Henry VIII the spirit of the Middle Ages promptly went out, is absurdly untrue. The traditions of centuries cannot be so neatly dispatched. North, in his translation of Plutarch's *Lives* ; Shakespeare, in his dramas from classical times ; Spenser, in his sage and serious epic, were all in their way followers of the mediaeval method.

Anachron-  
ism and  
Romance.

This method was simple and easy. To the mediaeval romancer the events and personages of ancient history were like the events and personages of ancient mythology : all that could or need be said of them was that they came to pass or existed in Europe a long time ago. The whole course of ancient times seemed to him like one age, and he gave it without compunction the habits and manners of the age in which he lived. To make Theseus a duke, and Hercules a great paladin of chivalry ; to turn Diana's nymphs into fairies, and raise Pluto and Proserpine from the dead to undertake new cares of royalty under heaven,<sup>1</sup> was as natural

<sup>1</sup> See the preceding section, pp. ix-x.

to the mediaeval story-teller as story-telling itself, and will always be natural so long as there are people who care more for stories than for history. North, in his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Theseus*, puts nunneries in ancient Athens, as Shakespeare does in this play (i. i. 70 f.); and the historian Froude, in his *Life of Julius Caesar*, published not so many years ago, calls the Pontifex Maximus the Pope of Rome. Though three centuries divide these authors, their spirit is the same.

On such a method strict anachronisms of time or date are obviously impossible. Where the whole of ancient times are regarded simply as one time, dates no longer exist, and anachronism becomes strictly a word of no meaning. This is the true explanation of what are called the anachronisms of Shakespeare. That they could ever have been ascribed to mere ignorance is a strange thing to think of, when the example of Spenser so clearly proves its folly. Spenser was a scholar, and knew the truth of these matters. But there are as many anachronisms in Spenser the scholar as in Shakespeare the natural wit; and the reason is that both, in their handling of past history and mythology, worked under the influence of the mediaeval idea. It is idle, therefore, to torment a reader by pointing to Dido and Aeneas in i. i. 170, and telling him that Shakespeare did wrong to make Hermia talk of them in the time of Theseus; or to quarrel with the chronology which makes Cadmus, Hercules, and Hippolyta contemporaries (iv. i. 112). Within the system—which was the system of Chaucer and Spenser as of all mediaeval romancing whatsoever—Hermia was as likely to know the story of Dido and Aeneas as we are, and Cadmus, Hercules, and Hippolyta were indeed contemporaries.

There remain to be discussed, before this section can be concluded, two questions of detail which could not well be discussed before: the time of the play, and the meaning of its title. The play is supposed to begin on April 27, four days before the new moon and the first day of May (i. i. 2). The lovers escape on the next night, the night of April 28, and are discovered in the morning by Theseus, who assumes that they have come out a-Maying (iv. i. 138). That is to say, what should be April 29

Anachronism in Shakespeare and Spenser.

Time of the play.



turns out to be May 1. Now this was certainly what Theseus desired, when he abused the old moon for being so long a-dying (i. i. 3-6); but it is to be doubted if even fairy aid could have helped him to remove two days from the calendar. The probability is that Shakespeare forgot, as he went on, what he had made Theseus say at the beginning; if Theseus's 'four happy days' be read as 'two', the difficulty ceases. What is clear is that everything in Act I happens on the first day; everything from Act II to Act IV on the night of the second day, or the early morning of the third, which is May day and the day of the wedding; everything in Act V on the night of the third day, which is the marriage night of all three couples.

Its Title.

This difficulty in the time of the play has been complicated for modern readers by the ambiguity of its title. 'I know not,' says Dr. Johnson, 'why Shakespeare calls this play *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* when he so carefully informs us that it happened on the night preceding *May day*.' The title of the play, however, has nothing to do with the time of the action; it is an intimation of the nature of the play, a description of its contents. Midsummer Eve, in popular tradition, was peculiarly a time of dreams, spectres, and apparitions; and Puck points the title in his apologetic epilogue (v. ii. 54 f.), when he begs the audience to imagine that they had but fallen asleep and that all they had seen was a dream.

#### THE DATE OF COMPOSITION : AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE METHODS OF DATING

Problems of date.

THE problem of the date of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* raises so many of the typical questions involved in the dating of a Shakespearean play; discloses so many of the methods, good and bad, commonly employed to solve them; and touches so frequently the history of Shakespeare's earlier writings, that I have thought it worth while to lay the whole matter before the reader, fully and in order. To know the probable date of a play is no doubt something; to know why the date is only probable is knowledge much more worth having. For one thing, so much may be learned in the process about the play, and about the other plays as well.



This play, it is pointed out in the next section, was in print by the winter of 1600. But we have an earlier and equally certain date from another source. We know that it must have been both written and performed at least as early as 1598. In that year a book was published which has become famous in a way never contemplated by its author : Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia* or *Wit's Treasury*, a sturdy duodecimo, containing in one part of it a list of Shakespeare's plays up to date. To this list, which occupies some four or five lines, the book owes its resurrection ; and indeed it has been of the first importance to students of Shakespearean chronology. The passage has been often quoted, and will now be quoted again :

' As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines, so *Shakespere* among ye English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage ; for Comedy, witnes his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love labors lost*, his *Love labours wonne*,<sup>1</sup> his *Midsummers night dreame*, and his *Merchant of Venice* : for Tragedy his *Richard the 2.* *Richard the 3.* *Henry the 4.* *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

' As *Epius Stolo* said, that the Muses would speake with *Plautus* tongue, if they would speak Latin : so I say that the Muses would speak with *Shakespeares* fine filed phrase, if they would speake English.'

Beyond the information which this passage supplies, we cannot go a step with certainty. The play was written by 1598. Nothing else is sure ; and all attempts to find an earlier date must proceed by conjecture alone. How dim a light conjecture may yield, when it is pursued for its own sake, and how little the conjectural critic minds the dark, has been nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in the discussions of this very question, when *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* was written. The play has been ransacked for clues, and passages breathing the very breath of innocence put to the most exquisite tortures for the sake of the date they were thought to conceal.

Two passages in particular have been singled out for suffering : Titania's description of the disordered seasons in II. i. 88 f. ; and

<sup>1</sup> Another name, probably, for *All's Well that Ends Well*.

the couplet title of one of the pieces submitted to Duke Theseus ('*The thrice three Muses mourning for the death Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary*': v. i. 52-3).

ii. i. 88 f.  
(the dis-  
ordered  
seasons).

Antiquaries have found that in the years 1594 and 1595 England was visited with great storms of wind and rain, which 'overturned trees, steeples, barns, houses', flooded the fields, and spread pestilence in every part. It has therefore been concluded that Titania's description is a picture of these events, and that the play was composed in 1594 or 1595. How this conclusion will strike the reader I do not know; but it is based on supposition alone. And I should think that any confidence one might have in this kind of supposition must be rudely shaken when one finds so cool a critic as Dr. Johnson declaring positively, on this very passage, that here, if anywhere, Shakespeare owes a debt to the classics. 'There are not,' he says, 'many passages in Shakespeare which one can be certain he has borrowed from the Ancients; but this is one of the few that, I think, will admit of no dispute. Our Author's admirable description of the miseries of the Country being plainly an imitation of that which Ovid draws, as consequent on the grief of Ceres, for the loss of her daughter.' Plainly between this supposition and the other no reconciliation can be effected. The first is possible; the second is not impossible. It is equally possible and much more likely that the picture drawn by Titania owes nothing either to history or to the Ancients, but is, like Titania herself, a product of the dramatist's imagination.

v. i. 52-3  
(Spenser  
or  
Greene?).

The second passage has been variously treated. Some think it is a reference to the death of Spenser; others that it is a reference to the death of Robert Greene, the dramatist and pamphleteer. The two men had this (if nothing else) in common, that both were well-known authors and died in want. If the passage refers to the death of Spenser, it must have been inserted after the appearance of the play upon the stage; for the play was acted in 1598, and Spenser died in 1599. If it refers to Greene (who died in 1592), we must credit Shakespeare with an act of generosity almost too complicated to be credible. For Greene had attacked him as a plagiarist in the last thing he ever wrote; and even if Shakespeare

desired to return good for evil, he cannot have imagined that his audience would perceive beneath so vague a word as 'Learning' the figure of Robert Greene. Greene was a writer with a public, and his end was known. The miserable story of his life and last days, written in penitence from his death-bed, had made a stir at the time. But time had passed, and Greene was no Otway or Chatterton to survive the sensation of the day. This conjecture, therefore, may be dismissed. It has nothing but the interest of Greene's name to recommend it, and it has detained us too long.

A third conjecture, that Shakespeare, when he wrote this title, was thinking of the title of Spenser's poem, *The Teares of the Muses, or the neglect and contempt of learning*, has more to be said for it. I say 'thinking' of this title; not 'alluding' to it, as these things are generally put. There is nothing to allude to. It ran in his head as he was thinking of titles. But even so we are no better off; for Spenser's poem appeared in 1591. And since nobody was ever in any danger of supposing that Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* before that date, we have still all the years to choose from between 1591 and 1598.

It has been thought, with great probability of truth, that this play was written for some special occasion: to celebrate, perhaps, some noble marriage. We know that in these years Shakespeare became intimate with the noble playgoers of the time, and came to be a favourite dramatist at the Court. The play is of the sort that was usually presented at such festivities, and the Queen herself may have been present to hear the charming compliments paid to her beauty, her majesty, and singleness of state in II. i. 157 f. But when we have got so far we are no nearer to a date than ever. Which of the Court marriages between 1591 and 1598 is to be selected for this honour? Some foolish people, playing a sort of children's game of 'I choose', have pinned their faith to this marriage and to that. But we need not imitate their folly. Where there are no grounds for judgement it is childish, and may be mischievous, to play at preferences.

The help that we might expect to receive from the style and manner of the piece, from its diction and versification, is here

Style,  
Verse, &c.

scarcely to be had. The poetry of the play, 'glowing with the warmth of a youthful imagination, the many scenes which it contains of almost continual rhyme, the poverty of the fable, and want of discrimination among the higher personages', all disposed Malone to believe that it was 'one of our author's earliest attempts at comedy'. Now it is true that much rhyme in a Shakespearean play is normally a sign that the play is early. It is also true that the play we are considering is full of youthful imagination, that it contains more poetry than drama, that the plot is thin, and the serious characters undeveloped. These, too, are normally the signs of an early play. But when it is remembered that our play was almost certainly a festival play, a kind of masque, this system of signs loses much of its force. Such plays were naturally rhyming plays: rhymes were expected. They were naturally youthful, for it is the nature of all festivity to assume the air of youth. Their plots were naturally thin, and their characters undramatic, because of the demand which they had to satisfy for pageant, and because pageant, a spectacular thing, is incompatible with real drama. So far as all this goes, then, Shakespeare might have written *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* at any time in the first ten years of his authorship. Malone himself, the most careful of men, found this out as he went on, and proposed as many as three dates at three different times.

Meres's  
list again.

Defeated once more in our search for truth, we retire from supposition to fact. Francis Meres's list is at any rate a real thing. How are the plays which it contains to be distributed over the nine years from 1589, when Shakespeare commenced playwright in his own name, to 1598, the year when the list was published? To the plays in the list must be added the three parts of *Henry VI*, in which Shakespeare unquestionably had a share, and his poems, the *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and the *Sonnets*. Even with this plainer problem before us we cannot look to come, except by accident, within more than a year or two of the truth. It is by no means easy, in the almost total absence of precise dates, to fit so many compositions into so small a number of years. The feat has been performed, however, by the patience of scholars; and what we have to do, after reviewing the distributions upon which



they are fairly agreed, is to find some likely gap in the years with room for still another play. If we take it this way, the year 1594 will probably appear to be as likely a date as any. This was Malone's last choice, and it will serve our turn.

### THE TEXT: FOLIOS AND QUARTOS

SINCE I shall have occasion, in what follows, to speak of Folios and Quartos. I shall begin by explaining what they mean. The early editions of Shakespeare's plays are of two kinds. There are the editions of single plays, most of which appeared in the author's lifetime; and there are the collected editions of his plays which appeared after his death. The first are called Quartos, because they are of quarto size; the second are called Folios, because they are of folio size. Seventeen of the plays appeared in various Quarto editions; the remaining twenty were printed for the first time in the First Folio edition of 1623.

This edition was prepared by two of Shakespeare's friends and fellow-actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, seven years after his death. It was meant to settle, so far as possible, which of the plays attributed to Shakespeare were really his, and what should be the standard text of the plays admitted to be genuine. Their aim was laudable, friendly, and enlightened. We owe twenty of the plays to their exertions; for these twenty their edition is the sole authority. For all but one of the other seventeen, though some of the Quarto versions are sometimes preferable, the First Folio supplies, on the whole, an excellent working text. Three Folio editions followed the first, in 1632, 1663, and 1685, each a copy of its predecessor, with errors and alterations of its own. They were the last of the seventeenth-century editions of Shakespeare. With the opening of the eighteenth century began the age of the modern edition.

*A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is one of the plays which appeared first in quarto. Two such editions were published. The first appeared in 1600; the second, which is also dated 1600, we now know to have been printed in 1619. The two editions are generally styled, in discussions of this play, the First and Second Quartos. No others were published before the First Folio of 1623.

$F_1$  follows      When, in order to construct the best possible text, we compare  
 $Q_2$  these three editions together, two things become apparent. It becomes apparent that the First Quarto edition is nearer to the original than the other two, and that the First Folio editors followed not the First Quarto but the Second. The evidence on which these two conclusions rest, if fully stated, would convince a court of law. It will be enough to mention some of the more interesting variations.

$Q_1$  and  
 $Q_2$  com-  
 pared.      The persons responsible for the Second Quarto version had ideas, unfortunately, about diction, and took something of the same freedom with Shakespeare's text as was taken by the earlier eighteenth-century editors. When a word or a form seemed strange they were apt to substitute some harmless equivalent, nearer to the mode of ordinary town-bred speech. In a play so full of provincial dialect and deliberate archaism as *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* this tendency had ample scope. It is one of the marks of authenticity in the First Quarto that it has so many original spellings. The Second Quarto changes 'thorough' to 'through' (II. i. 3, &c.), 'sprite' to 'spirit' (II. i. 33), 'steppe' to 'steepe' (II. i. 69), and so on, without compunction; and the Folios follow mildly in its track. Sometimes, though this is rare, it corrects the First. It does so in III. ii. 237, where the First Quarto reads 'I do. Persever'. The Second Quarto reads instead 'I, do, persever', which appears in our text, 'Ay, do, persever.' 'I' was the Elizabethan printers' way of spelling 'Ay'; hence this mistake, and many others in other plays. The conclusion would seem to be that the Second Quarto, though inferior in many ways to the First, is not to be despised. It presents a damaged text, but in one or two places it has preserved the truth.

Methods  
 of  $F_1$ .      The editors of the First Folio, with all their shortcomings, were meritorious workmen. For their chief mistake, the using of the inferior Quarto, it is hard to blame them. The two Quartos had the same date on their title page; and even if they knew that one was later than the other, they may well have thought, as the untrained mind is apt to think, that of two editions the later was probably the better. In any case they were far from following the Second Quarto blindly. Their besetting sin was neither care-

lessness nor indifference, but over-zeal. They were so keen to put all right. An ill-sounding or halting line seldom appealed to them in vain. In II. i. 210 ('Than to be used as you use your dog') they changed 'use' to 'do', thinking, apparently, that too many 'uses' spoil the line. In III. ii. 220 ('I am amazed at your passionate words') 'passionate' is due perhaps to a desire that all the lines should give good measure. It is in neither of the Quartos, and yet you will find it in most modern texts. In IV. i. 198-9 they extended their solicitude for metre so far as to omit altogether two half-lines, which seemed to them to hurt the scansion ('Are you sure That we are awake?'). It is impossible to approve of methods like these, but they were well meant, and applied on intelligible principles.

In drawing conclusions about the work of the First Folio Two editors on this play, I should lay stress on two passages. In the first they make a small but real correction of a certain kind; in the second they put forward a remarkable reading which is quite independent of either of the Quartos.

In both the Quartos the speech of Wall is delivered by Flute v. i. 158. ('I, one Flute by name, present a wall,' v. i. 158). But this is a mistake. In the distribution of characters it is plainly laid down that Snout is to be Wall, and Flute is to be Thisby. The First Folio, therefore, changed 'Flute' to 'Snout'. But to be able to make a change of this sort while the printing of the play was going forward, argues not only solicitude in the editors, but practical knowledge of the play. No doubt Heminge and Condell had acted in it.

In the other passage, v. i. 210-11 ('Now is the mural down between the two neighbours') the reading of the First Folio<sup>11</sup> has supplied the basis of the commonly accepted version. It reads 'Now is the morall down,' and Pope cleverly emended 'morall' to 'mural'. But the reading of the two Quartos is something entirely different: 'Now is the Moon used.' The Folio editors were dissatisfied with this, as well they might be, and replaced it by something else. The question is, where did they get it? Either they had some other version of this part of the play, or they were indebted to their memory as actors. Which-

ever be the true explanation, they went far to redeem their error in following the Second Quarto by the caution with which they received its readings when they seemed bad, and by the anxiety which they displayed for sense and metre in passages where neither Quarto gave any help.

Con-  
clusion.

The text of the present edition, and indeed of all modern editions, is a composite thing, made up of a selection of the best readings obtainable from these early texts. There are still in the play some battered phrases and passages that defy emendation: like v. i. 59, which has bred more conjectures than there are letters in the line, and III. i. 85 f., a foolish passage which it is perhaps unwise to trouble about. But on the whole we have little reason to complain.



# A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.	HERMIA, Daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.	HELENA, in love with Demetrius.
LYSANDER, } in love with Her-	
DEMETRIUS, } mia.	
PHILOSTRATE, Master of the Revels to Theseus.	ÖBERON, King of the Fairies.
QUINCE, a Carpenter.	TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies.
SNUG, a Joiner.	PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.
BOTTOM, a Weaver.	PEASE-BLOSSOM, }
FLUTE, a Bellows-mender.	COBWEB, } Fairies.
SNOUT, a Tinker.	MOTH, }
STARVELING, a Tailor.	MUSTARD-SEED, }
	Other Fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.	

SCENE.—*Athens, and a Wood near it.*

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.—*Athens. The Palace of THESEUS.*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.*

*Theseus.* Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
 Draws on apace: four happy days bring in  
 Another moon; but O! methinks how slow  
 This old moon wanes; she lingers my desires,  
 Like to a step-dame, or a dowager  
 Long withering out a young man's revenue. 5

*Hippolyta.* Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;  
 Four nights will quickly dream away the time;  
 And then the moon, like to a silver bow  
 New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night 10  
 Of our solemnities.

*Theseus.* Go, Philostrate,  
 Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;  
 Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;  
 Turn melancholy forth to funerals;  
 The pale companion is not for our pomp. 15

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE.*]

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
 And won thy love doing thee injuries ;  
 But I will wed thee in another key,  
 With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

*Enter* EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, *and* DEMETRIUS.

*Egeus.* Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke ! 20

*Theseus.* Thanks, good Egeus : what 's the news with thee ?

*Egeus.* Full of vexation come I, with complaint  
 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.  
 Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,  
 This man hath my consent to marry her. 25

Stand forth, Lysander : and, my gracious duke,  
 This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child :  
 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rimes,  
 And interchang'd love-tokens with my child ;  
 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung, 30  
 With feigning voice, verses of feigning love ;

And stol'n the impression of her fantasy  
 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,  
 Knacks, trifles, nose-gays, sweetmeats, messengers  
 Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth ; 35  
 With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart ;  
 Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,

To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,  
 Be it so she will not here before your Grace  
 Consent to marry with Demetrius, 40  
 I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,  
 As she is mine, I may dispose of her ;  
 Which shall be either to this gentleman,  
 Or to her death, according to our law  
 Immediately provided in that case. 45

*Theseus.* What say you, Hermia ? be advis'd, fair maid.  
 To you, your father should be as a god ;  
 One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one  
 To whom you are but as a form in wax  
 By him imprinted, and within his power 50  
 To leave the figure or disfigure it.  
 Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

*Hermia.* So is Lysander.

*Theseus.* In himself he is ;  
 But, in this kind, wanting your father's voice,  
 The other must be held the worthier. 55

*Hermia.* I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

*Theseus.* Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

*Hermia.* I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.

I know not by what power I am made bold,  
Nor how it may concern my modesty 60  
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;  
But I beseech your Grace, that I may know  
The worst that may befall me in this case,  
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

*Theseus.* Either to die the death, or to abjure 65  
For ever the society of men.

Therefore, fair *Hermia*, question your desires;  
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,  
Whe'r, if you yield not to your father's choice,  
You can endure the livery of a nun, 70  
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,  
To live a barren sister all your life,  
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,  
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage; 75  
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,  
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn  
Grows, lives, and dies, in single blessedness.

*Hermia.* So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,  
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up 80  
Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke  
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

*Theseus.* Take time to pause; and, by the next new  
moon,—

The sealing-day betwixt my love and me  
For everlasting bond of fellowship,— 85  
Upon that day either prepare to die  
For disobedience to your father's will,  
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;  
Or on Diana's altar to protest  
For aye austerity and single life. 90

*Demetrius.* Relent, sweet *Hermia*; and, *Lysander*, yield  
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

*Lysander.* You have her father's love, *Demetrius*;  
Let me have *Hermia's*: do you marry him.

*Egeus.* Scornful *Lysander*! true, he hath my love, 95  
And what is mine my love shall render him;  
And she is mine, and all my right of her

I do estate unto Demetrius.

*Lysander.* I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,  
 As well possess'd ; my love is more than his ; 100  
 My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd  
 If not with vantage, as Demetrius' ;  
 And, which is more than all these boasts can be,  
 I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia.  
 Why should not I then prosecute my right ? 105  
 Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,  
 Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,  
 And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,  
 Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,  
 Upon this spotted and inconstant man. 110

*Theseus.* I must confess that I have heard so much,  
 And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;  
 But, being over-full of self-affairs,  
 My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come ;  
 And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me, 115  
 I have some private schooling for you both.  
 For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself  
 To fit your fancies to your father's will,  
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up,  
 Which by no means we may extenuate, 120  
 To death, or to a vow of single life.  
 Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?  
 Demetrius and Egeus, go along :  
 I must employ you in some business  
 Against our nuptial, and confer with you 125  
 Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

*Egeus.* With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, DEMETRIUS,  
*and Train.*]

*Lysander.* How now, my love ! Why is your cheek so pale ?

How chance the roses there do fade so fast ?

*Hermia.* Belike for want of rain, which I could well 130  
 Beteem them from the tempest of mine eyes.

*Lysander.* Ay me ! for aught that ever I could read,  
 Could ever hear by tale or history,  
 The course of true love never did run smooth ;  
 But, either it was different in blood,— 135

*Hermia.* O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

*Lysander.* Or else misgrafted in respect of years,—



*Hermia.* O spite ! too old to be engag'd to young.

*Lysander.* Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,—

*Hermia.* O hell ! to choose love by another's eye. 140

*Lysander.* Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,  
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
Making it momentany as a sound,  
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream,  
Brief as the lightning in the collied night, 145  
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say, 'Behold !'  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up :  
So quick bright things come to confusion.

*Hermia.* If then true lovers have been ever cross'd, 150  
It stands as an edict in destiny :  
Then let us teach our trial patience,  
Because it is a customary cross,  
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,  
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers. 155

*Lysander.* A good persuasion : therefore, hear me, *Hermia*.  
I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
Of great revenue, and she hath no child :  
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues ;  
And she respects me as her only son. 160  
There, gentle *Hermia*, may I marry thee,  
And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,  
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night,  
And in the wood, a league without the town, 165  
Where I did meet thee once with *Helena*,  
To do observance to a morn of May,  
There will I stay for thee.

*Hermia.* My good *Lysander* !  
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,  
By his best arrow with the golden head, 170  
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,  
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,  
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,  
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,  
By all the vows that ever men have broke,— 175  
In number more than ever women spoke,—  
In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

*Lysander.* Keep promise, love. Look, here comes *Helena*.

*Enter* HELENA.

*Hermia.* God speed fair Helena ! Whither away ? 180

*Helena.* Call you me fair ? that fair again unsay.

Demetrius loves your fair : O happy fair !

Your eyes are lode-stars ! and your tongue's sweet air

More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear, 185

Sickness is catching : O ! were favour so,

Yours would I catch, fair *Hermia*, ere I go ;

My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,

My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.

Were the world mine, *Demetrius* being bated, 190

The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

O ! teach me how you look, and with what art

You sway the motion of *Demetrius*' heart.

*Hermia.* I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

*Helena.* O ! that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill. 195

*Hermia.* I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

*Helena.* O ! that my prayers could such affection move.

*Hermia.* The more I hate, the more he follows me.

*Helena.* The more I love, the more he hateth me.

*Hermia.* His folly, *Helena*, is no fault of mine. 200

*Helena.* None, but your beauty : would that fault were mine !

*Hermia.* Take comfort : he no more shall see my face ;  
Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did *Lysander* see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me : 205

O ! then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell.

*Lysander.* Helen, to you our minds we will unfold.

To-morrow night, when *Phoebe* doth behold

Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass, 210

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,—

A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,—

Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

*Hermia.* And in the wood, where often you and I

Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie, 215

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my *Lysander* and myself shall meet ;

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,

To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow : pray thou for us ; 220  
 And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius !  
 Keep word, Lysander : we must starve our sight  
 From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

*Lysander.* I will, my Hermia.—[*Exit* HERMIA.] Helena,  
 adieu :

As you on him, Demetrius dote on you ! [Exit.

*Helena.* How happy some o'er other some can be ! 226  
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she ;  
 But what of that ? Demetrius thinks not so ;  
 He will not know what all but he do know ;  
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, 230  
 So I, admiring of his qualities.

Things base and vile ; holding no quantity,  
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.  
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,  
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind. 235  
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste ;  
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste :  
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,  
 Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, 240  
 So the boy Love is perjur'd every where ;  
 For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,  
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine ;  
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
 So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt. 245

I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight :  
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night  
 Pursue her ; and for this intelligence  
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense :  
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain, 250  
 To have his sight thither and back again. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*The Same.* A Room in QUINCE'S House.

*Enter* QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

*Quince.* Is all our company here ?

*Bottom.* You were best to call them generally, man  
 by man, according to the scrip.

*Quince.* Here is the scroll of every man's name, which  
 is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude 5

before the duke and the duchess on his wedding-day at night.

*Bottom.* First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

*Quince.* Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

*Bottom.* A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

*Quince.* Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

*Bottom.* Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

*Quince.* You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

*Bottom.* What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

*Quince.* A lover, that kills himself most gallantly for love.

*Bottom.* That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

The raging rocks  
And shivering shocks  
Shall break the locks

Of prison gates:  
And Phibbus' car  
Shall shine from far  
And make and mar

The foolish Fates.

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

*Quince.* Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

*Flute.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quince.* You must take Thisby on you.

*Flute.* What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

*Quince.* It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

*Flute.* Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

*Quince.* That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.



*Bottom.* An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne !' 'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear ; thy Thisby dear, and lady dear !' 55

*Quince.* No, no ; you must play Pyramus ; and Flute, you Thisby.

*Bottom.* Well, proceed. 60

*Quince.* Robin Starveling, the tailor.

*Starveling.* Here, Peter Quince.

*Quince.* Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

*Snout.* Here, Peter Quince. 65

*Quince.* You, Pyramus's father ; myself, Thisby's father ; Snug, the joiner, you the lion's part : and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

*Snug.* Have you the lion's part written ? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study. 70

*Quince.* You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

*Bottom.* Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me ; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, ' Let him roar again, let him roar again.' 75

*Quince.* An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek ; and that were enough to hang us all. 80

*All.* That would hang us, every mother's son.

*Bottom.* I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us ; but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove ; I will roar you as 'twere any nightingale. 85

*Quince.* You can play no part but Pyramus ; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man ; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day ; a most lovely, gentleman-like man ; therefore, you must needs play Pyramus. 90

*Bottom.* Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in ?

*Quince.* Why, what you will. 95

*Bottom.* I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown colour beard, your perfect yellow.

*Quince.* Well, masters, here are your parts ; and I am 100  
to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them  
by to-morrow night, and meet me in the palace wood,  
a mile without the town, by moonlight : there will we 105  
rehearse ; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged  
with company, and our devices known. In the meantime  
I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I  
pray you, fail me not. 110

*Bottom.* We will meet ; and there we may rehearse  
more obscenely and courageously. Take pains ; be per-  
fect ; adieu.

*Quince.* At the duke's oak we meet.

*Bottom.* Enough ; hold, or cut bow-strings. [*Exeunt.* 115 13

## ACT II.

### SCENE I.—A Wood near Athens.

*Enter a Fairy on one side, and PUCK on the other.*

*Puck.* How now, spirit ! whither wander you ?

*Fairy.* Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,

Through flood, thorough fire, 5

I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moone's sphere ;

And I serve the fairy queen,

To dew her orbs upon the green ;

The cowslips tall her pensioners be ; 10

In their gold coats spots you see ;

Those be rubies, fairy favours,

In their freckles live their savours :

I must go seek some dew-drops here,

And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear. 15

Farewell, thou lob of spirits : I'll be gone ;

Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

*Puck.* The king doth keep his revels here to-night.

Take heed the queen come not within his sight ;

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20

Because that she as her attendant hath

A lovely boy, stol'n from an Indian king ;

She never had so sweet a changeling ;

And jealous Oberon would have the child  
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild ; 25  
 But she, perforce, withholds the loved boy,  
 Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy.  
 And now they never meet in grove, or green,  
 By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,  
 But they do square ; that all their elves, for fear, 30  
 Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

*Fairy.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,  
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite  
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow : are you not he  
 That frights the maidens of the villagery ; 35  
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,  
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;  
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm ;  
 Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?  
 Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, 40  
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck  
 Are you not he ?

*Puck.* Fairy, thou speak'st aright ;  
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.  
 I jest to Oberon, and make him smile  
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45  
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :  
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,  
 In very likeness of a roasted crab ;  
 And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob  
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale. 50  
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;  
 Then slip I from her, and down topples she,  
 And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough ;  
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and loß ; 55  
 And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear  
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.  
 But, room, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

*Fairy.* And here my mistress. Would that he were gone !

*Enter OBERON from one side, with his Train ; and TITANIA from the other, with hers.*

*Oberon.* Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

*Titania.* What ! jealous Oberon. Fairies, skip hence :  
 I have forsworn his bed and company.

*Oberon.* Tarry, rash wanton! am not I thy lord?

*Titania.* Then, I must be thy lady; but I know  
 When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land, 65  
 And in the shape of Corin sat all day,  
 Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love  
 To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,  
 Come from the furthest steppe of India?  
 But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, 70  
 Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,  
 To Theseus must be wedded, and you come  
 To give their bed joy and prosperity.

*Oberon.* How canst thou thus for shame, *Titania*,  
 Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, 75  
 Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?  
 Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night  
 And make him with fair Aegle break his faith,  
 With Ariadne, and Antiope? 80

*Titania.* These are the forgeries of jealousy:  
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,  
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,  
 By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,  
 Or in the beached margent of the sea, 85  
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,  
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.  
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,  
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea  
 Contagious fogs; which, falling in the land, 90  
 Have every pelting river made so proud  
 That they have overborne their continents:  
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,  
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard: 95  
 The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
 And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;  
 The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,  
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green  
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable: 100  
 The human mortals want their winter here:  
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:  
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,  
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,  
 That rheumatic diseases do abound: 105  
 And thorough this distemperature we see



The seasons alter : hoary-headed frosts  
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,  
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown  
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds 110  
 Is, as in mockery, set. The spring, the summer,  
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change  
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,  
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.  
 And this same progeny of evil comes 115  
 From our debate, from our dissension :  
 We are their parents and original.

*Oberon.* Do you amend it then ; it lies in you.  
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon ?  
 I do but beg a little changeling boy, 120  
 To be my henchman.

*Titania.* Set your heart at rest ;  
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
 His mother was a votaress of my order : *one found by a*  
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,  
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side, 125  
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,  
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;  
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ; 135  
 And for her sake I do rear up her boy,  
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

*Oberon.* How long within this wood intend you stay ?

*Titania.* Perchance, till after Theseus' wedding-day.  
 If you will patiently dance in our round, 140  
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;  
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

*Oberon.* Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

*Titania.* Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away !  
 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay. 145

[*Exit TITANIA with her Train.*]

*Oberon.* Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this grove  
 Till I torment thee for this injury.  
 My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou remember'st  
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,  
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back 150  
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,  
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,  
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres  
 To hear the sea-maid's music.

*Puck.*

I remember.

*Oberon.* That very time I saw, but thou couldst not, 155  
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,  
 Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took  
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,  
 And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,  
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts ; 160  
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft  
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,  
 And the imperial votaress passed on,  
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.  
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell : 165  
 It fell upon a little western flower,  
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,  
 And maidens call it, Love-in-idleness.  
 Fetch me that flower ; the herb I show'd thee once  
 The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid 170  
 Will make or man or woman madly dote  
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
 Fetch me this herb ; and be thou here again  
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

*Puck.* I'll put a girdle round about the earth 175  
 In forty minutes. [*Exit.*]

*Oberon.* Having once this juice  
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes :  
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,  
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180  
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,  
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love :  
 And ere I take this charm off from her sight,  
 As I can take it with another herb,  
 I'll make her render up her page to me. 185  
 But who comes here ? I am invisible,  
 And I will overhear their conference.

*Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.*

*Demetrius.* I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
 Where is Lysander and fair Hermia ?  
 The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190  
 Thou told'st me they were stol'n into this wood ;  
 And here am I, and wood within this wood,  
 Because I cannot meet my Hermia.

Hence ! get thee gone, and follow me no more.

*Helena.* You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant : 195  
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart  
Is true as steel : leave you your power to draw,  
And I shall have no power to follow you.

*Demetrius.* Do I entice you ? Do I speak you fair ?  
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth 200  
Tell you I do not nor I cannot love you ?

*Helena.* And even for that do I love you the more.  
I am your spaniel ; and, Demetrius,  
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you :  
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me, 205  
Neglect me, lose me ; only give me leave,  
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.  
What worser place can I beg in your love,  
And yet a place of high respect with me,  
Than to be used as you use your dog ? 210

*Demetrius.* Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,  
For I am sick when I do look on you.

*Helena.* And I am sick when I look not on you.

*Demetrius.* You do impeach your modesty too much,  
To leave the city, and commit yourself  
Into the hands of one that loves you not.

*Helena.* Your virtue is my privilege : for that 220  
It is not night when I do see your face,  
Therefore I think I am not in the night ;  
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,  
For you in my respect are all the world :  
Then how can it be said I am alone, 225  
When all the world is here to look on me ?

*Demetrius.* I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,  
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

*Helena.* The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd ; 230  
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase ;  
The dove pursues the griffin ; the mild hind  
Makes speed to catch the tiger : bootless speed,  
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

*Demetrius.* I will not stay thy questions : let me go ; 235  
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe  
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

*Helena.* Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,  
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius !

Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex. 240  
 We cannot fight for love, as men may do ;  
 We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.

[*Exit* DEMETRIUS.

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,  
 To die upon the hand I love so well. ] [*Exit.* 241

*Oberon.* Fare thee well, nymph : ere he do leave this grove,  
 Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love. 246

*Re-enter* PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there ? Welcome, wanderer.

*Puck.* Ay, there it is.

*Oberon.* I pray thee, give it me.

I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,  
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows 250

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
 With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine :

There sleeps Titania some time of the night,  
 Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight ;  
 And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin, 255

Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in :  
 And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
 And make her full of hateful fantasies.

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :  
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love 260

With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;

But do it when the next thing he espies  
 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man  
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Effect it with some care, that he may prove 265  
 More fond on her than she upon her love.

And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

*Puck.* Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Another Part of the Wood.*

*Enter* TITANIA, with her Train.

*Titania.* Come, now a roundel and a fairy song ;  
 Then, for the third of a minute, hence ;  
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,  
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,  
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back 5



The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders  
At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep ;  
Then to your offices, and let me rest.

*The Fairies sing.*

I.

You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedge-hogs, be not seen ; 10  
Newts, and blind-worms, do no wrong ;  
Come not near our fairy queen.

Philomel, with melody,  
Sing in our sweet lullaby ;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby ; lulla, lulla, lullaby : 15  
Never harm,  
Nor spell, nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh ;  
So, good night, with lullaby.

II.

Weaving spiders come not here ; 20  
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !  
Beetles black, approach not near ;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Philomel, with melody, &c.

*Fairy.* Hence, away ! now all is well. 25  
One aloof stand sentinel.

*[Exeunt Fairies. TITANIA sleeps.]*

*Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on TITANIA'S eyelids.*

*Oberon.* What thou seest when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true-love take ;  
Love and languish for his sake :  
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear, 30  
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,  
In thy eye that shall appear  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.  
Wake when some vile thing is near. *[Exit.]*

*Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.*

*Lysander.* Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood ;  
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way : 36  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,  
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

*Hermia.* Be it so, Lysander : find you out a bed,  
For I upon this bank will rest my head. 40

*Lysander.* One turf shall serve as pillow for us both ;  
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

*Hermia.* Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,  
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

*Lysander.* O ! take the sense, sweet, of my innocence, 45  
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,  
So that but one heart we can make of it ;  
Two bosoms interchained with an oath ;  
So then two bosoms and a single troth. 50  
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,  
For, lying so, *Hermia*, I do not lie.

*Hermia.* Lysander riddles very prettily :  
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,  
If *Hermia* meant to say Lysander lied. 55

But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy  
Lie further off ; in human modesty,  
Such separation as may well be said  
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,  
So far be distant ; and, good night, sweet friend. 60  
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end !

*Lysander.* Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;  
And then end life when I end loyalty !

*[Retires a little distance.]*

Here is my bed : sleep give thee all his rest !

*Hermia.* With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd ! 65

*[They sleep.]*

*Enter PUCK.*

*Puck.* Through the forest have I gone,  
But Athenian found I none,  
On whose eyes I might approve  
This flower's force in stirring love.  
Night and silence ! who is here ? 70  
Weeds of Athens he doth wear :  
This is he, my master said,  
Despised the Athenian maid ;  
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
On the dank and dirty ground. 75  
Pretty soul ! she durst not lie  
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.

*[Squeezes the flower on LYSANDER'S eyelids.]*

Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
 All the power this charm doth owe.  
 When thou wak'st, let love forbid 80  
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid :  
 So awake when I am gone ;  
 For I must now to Oberon. [Exit.

*Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.*

*Helena.* Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

*Demetrius.* I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

*Helena.* O ! wilt thou darkling leave me ? do not so. 86

*Demetrius.* Stay, on thy peril : I alone will go.

[Exit DEMETRIUS.

*Helena.* O ! I am out of breath in this fond chase.

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies ; 90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright ? Not with salt tears :

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear ;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear ; 95

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne ?

But who is here ? Lysander ! on the ground ! 100

Dead ? or asleep ? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

*Lysander.* [Awaking.] And run through fire I will for thy  
 sweet sake.

Transparent Helena ! Nature shows art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart. 105

Where is Demetrius ? O ! how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword.

*Helena.* Do not say so, Lysander ; say not so.

What though he love your Hermia ? Lord ! what though ?

Yet Hermia still loves you : then be content. 110

*Lysander.* Content with Hermia ! No : I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia, but Helena I love :

Who will not change a raven for a dove ?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd, 115

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season;  
 So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;  
 And touching now the point of human skill,  
 Reason becomes the marshal to my will, 120  
 And leads me to your eyes; where I o'erlook  
 Love's stories written in love's richest book.

*Helena.* Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?  
 When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?  
 Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man, 125  
 That I did never, no, nor ever can,  
 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,  
 But you must flout my insufficiency?  
 Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,  
 In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130  
 But fare you well: perforce I must confess  
 I thought you lord of more true gentleness.  
 O! that a lady of one man refus'd,  
 Should of another therefore be abus'd. [Exit.

*Lysander.* She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there;  
 And never mayst thou come Lysander near. 136  
 For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things  
 The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;  
 Or, as the heresies that men do leave  
 Are hated most of those they did deceive: 140  
 So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,  
 Of all be hated, but the most of me!  
 And, all my powers, address your love and might  
 To honour Helen, and to be her knight. [Exit.

*Hermia.* [Awaking.] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy  
 best 145  
 To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast.  
 Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!  
 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:  
 Methought a serpent eat my heart away,  
 And you sat smiling at his cruel prey. 150  
 Lysander! what! remov'd?—Lysander! lord!  
 What! out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?  
 Alack! where are you? speak, an if you hear;  
 Speak, of all loves! I swound almost with fear.  
 No! then I well perceive you are not nigh: 155  
 Either death or you I'll find immediately. [Exit.



## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Wood. TITANIA lying asleep.**Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.**Bottom.* Are we all met ?*Quince.* Pat, pat ; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house ; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

5

*Bottom.* Peter Quince,—*Quince.* What sayst thou, bully Bottom ?*Bottom.* There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that ?

10

*Snout.* By 'r lakin, a parlous fear.*Starveling.* I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

15

*Bottom.* Not a whit : I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue ; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed ; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver : this will put them out of fear.

20

*Quince.* Well, we will have such a prologue, and it shall be written in eight and six.

25

*Bottom.* No, make it two more : let it be written in eight and eight.*Snout.* Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion ?*Starveling.* I fear it, I promise you.

30

*Bottom.* Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves : to bring in,—God shield us !—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing ; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living, and we ought to look to it.

35

*Snout.* Therefore, another prologue must tell he is not a lion.*Bottom.* Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck ; and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect, 'Ladies,' or, 'Fair ladies,' 'I would wish you,' or, 'I

40

would request you,' or, 'I would entreat you, not to fear, not to tremble : my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life : no, I am no such thing : I am a man as other men are ;' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 45

*Quince.* Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things, that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber ; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight. 50

*Snug.* Doth the moon shine that night we play our play ?

*Bottom.* A calendar, a calendar ! look in the almanack ; find out moonshine, find out moonshine. 55

*Quince.* Yes, it doth shine that night.

*Bottom.* Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open ; and the moon may shine in at the casement. 60

*Quince.* Ay ; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing : we must have a wall in the great chamber ; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall. 65

*Snug.* You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom ? 70

*Bottom.* Some man or other must present Wall ; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall ; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper. 75

*Quince.* If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin : when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake ; and so every one according to his cue. 80

*Enter PUCK, behind.*

*Puck.* What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,  
So near the cradle of the fairy queen ?  
What ! a play toward ; I'll be an auditor ;  
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause. 85

*Quince.* Speak, Pyramus.—Thisby, stand forth.

*Bottom.* Thisby, the flowers have odious savours sweet,—

Quince. Odorous, odorous.

Bottom.—*odours savours sweet :*

*So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.*

90

But hark, a voice ! stay thou but here awhile,

*And by and by I will to thee appear.* [Exit.

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er play'd here ! [Exit.

Flute. Must I speak now ?

Quince. Ay, marry, must you ; for you must understand, he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

95

Flute. *Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,*

*Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,*

*Most brisky juvenal, and eke most lovely Jew,*

100

*As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,*

*I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.*

Quince. 'Ninus' tomb,' man. Why, you must not speak that yet ; that you answer to Pyramus : you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus, enter : your cue is past ; it is 'never tire.'

105

Flute. O !—*As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.*

*Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.*

Bottom. *If I were, fair Thisby, I were only thine.*

Quince. O monstrous ! O strange ! we are haunted. 110

Pray, masters ! fly, masters !—Help ! [Exeunt Clowns.

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,  
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through  
brier :

Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire ;

115

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,  
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. [Exit.

Bottom. Why do they run away ? this is a knavery  
of them to make me afraid.

*Re-enter SNOUT.*

Snout. O Bottom, thou are changed ! what do I see  
on thee ? 120

Bottom. What do you see ? you see an ass-head of  
your own, do you ? [Exit SNOUT.

*Re-enter QUINCE.*

*Quince.* Bless thee, Bottom ! bless thee ! thou art translated. [Exit. 125]

*Bottom.* I see their knavery : this is to make an ass of me ; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can : I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. 120

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,  
With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
The wren with little quill.

*Titania.* [Awaking.] What angel wakes me from my flowery bed ? 135

*Bottom.* The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
And dares not answer, nay ; 140

for indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird ? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so ?

*Titania.* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again :  
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note ; 145  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape ;  
And thy fair virtue's force, perforce, doth move me,  
On the first view, to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bottom.* Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that : and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity, that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion. 150

*Titania.* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful. 155

*Bottom.* Not so, neither ; but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

*Titania.* Out of this wood do not desire to go :  
Thou shalt remain here, whe'r thou wilt or no. 160  
I am a spirit of no common rate ;  
The summer still doth tend upon my state ;  
And I do love thee : therefore, go with me ;  
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,  
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep, 165  
And sing, while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep :



And I will purge thy mortal grossness so  
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.  
Pease-blossom ! Cobweb ! Moth ! and Mustard-seed !

*Enter Four Fairies.*

*Pease-blossom.* Ready.

*Cobweb.* And I.

*Moth.* And I.

*Mustard-seed.* And I.

*All Four.* Where shall we go? 170

*Titania.* Be kind and courteous to this gentleman ;  
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;  
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,  
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.  
The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees, 175  
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,  
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,  
To have my love to bed, and to arise ;  
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies  
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes : 180  
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

*Pease-blossom.* Hail, mortal !

*Cobweb.* Hail !

*Moth.* Hail !

*Mustard-seed.* Hail ! 185

*Bottom.* I cry your worships mercy, heartily : I beseech your worship's name.

*Cobweb.* Cobweb.

*Bottom.* I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb : if I cut my finger, I shall make bold 190  
with you. Your name, honest gentleman ?

*Pease-blossom.* Pease-blossom.

*Bottom.* I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash,  
your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good 195  
Master Pease-blossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir ?

*Mustard-seed.* Mustard-seed.

*Bottom.* Good Master Mustard-seed, I know your 200  
patience well : that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef  
hath devoured many a gentleman of your house. I promise you, your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustard-seed. 205

*Titania.* Come, wait upon him ; lead him to my bower.  
 The moon methinks, looks with a watery eye ;  
 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,  
 Lamenting some enforced chastity.  
 Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [*Exeunt.* 210]

SCENE II.—*Another Part of the Wood.*

*Enter OBERON.*

*Oberon.* I wonder if Titania be awak'd ;  
 Then, what it was that next came in her eye,  
 Which she must dote on in extremity.  
 Here comes my messenger.

*Enter PUCK.*

How now, mad spirit !  
 What night-rule now about this haunted grove ? 5  
*Puck.* My mistress with a monster is in love.  
 Near to her close and consecrated bower,  
 While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,  
 A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,  
 That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10  
 Were met together to rehearse a play  
 Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.  
 The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,  
 Who Pyramus presented in their sport  
 Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake, 15  
 When I did him at this advantage take ;  
 An ass's nowl I fixed on his head :  
 Anon his Thisbe must be answered,  
 And forth my mimick comes. When they him spy,  
 As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20  
 Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,  
 Rising and cawing at the gun's report,  
 Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky ;  
 So, at his sight, away his fellows fly,  
 And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls ; 25  
 He murder cries, and help from Athens calls.  
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,  
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong ;  
 For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch ;  
 Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch. 30

I led them on in this distracted fear,  
And left sweet Pyramus translated there ;  
When in that moment, so it came to pass,  
Titania wak'd and straightway lov'd an ass.

*Oberon.* This falls out better than I could devise. 35  
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes  
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do ?

*Puck.* I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—  
And the Athenian woman by his side ;  
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be ey'd. 40

*Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA.*

*Oberon.* Stand close : this is the same Athenian.

*Puck.* This is the woman ; but not this the man.

*Demetrius.* O ! why rebuke you him that loves you so ?  
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

*Hermia.* Now I but chide ; but I should use thee worse, 45  
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.  
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,  
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in knee deep,  
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50  
As he to me. Would he have stol'n away  
From sleeping Hermia ? I'll believe as soon  
This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon  
May through the centre creep, and so displease  
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes. 55  
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him ;  
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

*Demetrius.* So should the murder'd look, and so should I,  
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty ;  
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60  
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

*Hermia.* What's this to my Lysander ? where is he ?  
Ah ! good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me ?

*Demetrius.* I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

*Hermia.* Out, dog ! out, cur ! thou driv'st me past the 65  
bounds

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then ?

Henceforth be never number'd among men !

O ! once tell true, tell true, e'en for my sake ;

Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,

And hast thou kill'd him sleeping ? O brave touch ! 70

Could not a worm, an adder, do so much ?

An adder did it ; for with doubler tongue  
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

*Demetrius.* You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood :  
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood, 75  
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

*Hermia.* I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

*Demetrius.* An if I could, what should I get therefore ?

*Hermia.* A privilege never to see me more.  
And from thy hated presence part I so ; 80  
See me no more, whe'r he be dead or no. [*Exit.*]

*Demetrius.* There is no following her in this fierce vein :  
Here therefore for awhile I will remain.  
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow.  
For ~~debt~~ that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe ; 85  
~~Which now in some slight measure it will pay,~~

If for his tender here I make some stay. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]  
*Oberon.* What hast thou done ? thou hast mistaken quite,  
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :  
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90  
Some true-love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

*Puck.* Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,  
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

*Oberon.* About the wood go swifter than the wind,  
And Helena of Athens look thou find : 95  
All fancy-sick she is, and pale of cheer  
With sighs of love, that cost the fresh blood dear.  
By some illusion see thou bring her here :  
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

*Puck.* I go, I go ; look how I go ; 100  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*]

*Oberon.* Flower of this purple dye,  
Hit with Cupid's archery,  
Sink in apple of his eye.  
When his love he doth espy, 105  
Let her shine as gloriously  
As the Venus of the sky.  
When thou wak'st, if she be by,  
Beg of her for remedy.

*Re-enter Puck.*

*Puck.* Captain of our fairy band, 110  
Helena is here at hand,

And the youth, mistook by me,  
Pleading for a lover's fee. *laugh & play*  
Shall we their fond pageant see?

Lord, what fools these mortals be! 115

*Oberon.* Stand aside: the noise they make  
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

*Puck.* Then will two at once woo one;  
That must needs be sport alone;  
And those things do best please me 120  
That befall preposterously. *absurdly*

*Enter* LYSANDER and HELENA.

*Lysander.* Why should you think that I should woo in  
scorn?

Scorn and derision never come in tears: *laugh and weep*  
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,  
In their nativity all truth appears. 125

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,  
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

*Helena.* You do advance your cunning more and more.  
When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!

These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh.

Your vows, to her and me, put in two scales,

Will even weigh, and both as light as tales. *26*

*Lysander.* I had no judgment when to her I swore.

*Helena.* Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er. 135

*Lysander.* Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

*Demetrius.* [*Awaking.*] O Helen! goddess, nymph,  
perfect, divine!

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

Crystal is muddy. O! how ripe in show

Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow; 140

This pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,

Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow

When thou hold'st up thy hand. O! let me kiss

That princess of pure white, this seal of bliss.

*Helena.* O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent 145

To set against me for your merriment:

If you were civil and knew courtesy,

You would not do me thus much injury.

Can you not hate me, as I know you do,

But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150



If you were men, as men you are in show,  
 You would not use a gentle lady so ;  
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,  
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.

You both are rivals, and love *Hermia*,  
 And now both rivals, to mock *Helena* : 155

A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,  
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes  
 With your derision ! none of noble sort  
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort 160  
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

*Lysander*. You are unkind, *Demetrius* ; be not so ;  
 For you love *Hermia* ; this you know I know :  
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,  
 In *Hermia*'s love I yield you up my part ; 165  
 And yours of *Helena* to me bequeath,  
 Whom I do love, and will do to my death.

*Helena*. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

*Demetrius*. *Lysander*, keep thy *Hermia* ; I will none.  
 If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone. 170

My heart with her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,  
 And now to *Helen* it is home return'd,  
 There to remain.

*Lysander*. *Helen*, it is not so.

*Demetrius*. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,  
 Lest to thy peril thou aby it dear. 175  
 Look ! where thy love comes : yonder is thy dear.

*Enter HERMIA.*

*Hermia*. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,  
 The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;  
 Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,  
 It pays the hearing double recompense. 180

Thou art not by mine eye, *Lysander*, found ;  
 Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.  
 But why unkindly didst thou leave me so ?

*Lysander*. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go ?

*Hermia*. What love could press *Lysander* from my side ?

*Lysander*. *Lysander*'s love, that would not let him bide, 186  
 Fair *Helena*, who more engilds the night  
 Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.  
 Why seek'st thou me ? could not this make thee know,  
 The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so ? 190

*Hermia.* You speak not as you think : it cannot be.

*Helena.* Lo ! she is one of this confederacy.

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport in spite of me.

Injurious *Hermia* ! most ungrateful maid !

195

Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd

To bait me with this foul derision ?

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,

The sister-vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time

200

For parting us, O ! is it all forgot ?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence ?

We, *Hermia*, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needls created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,

205

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

But yet an union in partition ;

210

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem ;

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart ;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,

Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.

And will you rent our ancient love asunder,

215

To join with men in scorning your poor friend ?

It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly :

Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,

Though I alone do feel the injury.

*Hermia.* I am amazed at your passionate words.

220

I scorn you not : it seems that you scorn me.

*Helena.* Have you not set *Lysander*, as in scorn,

To follow me and praise my eyes and face,

And made your other love, *Demetrius*,—

Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,—

225

To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,

Precious, celestial ? Wherefore speaks he this

To her he hates ? and wherefore doth *Lysander*

Deny your love, so rich within his soul,

And tender me, forsooth, affection,

230

But by your setting on, by your consent ?

What though I be not so in grace as you,

So hung upon with love, so fortunate,

But miserable most to love unlov'd ?

This you should pity rather than despise.

235

*Hermia.* I understand not what you mean by this.

*Helena.* Ay, do, persevere, counterfeit sad looks,

Make mouths upon me when I turn my back ;

Wink each at other ; hold the sweet jest up :

This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240

If you have any pity, grace, or manners,

You would not make me such an argument.

But, fare ye well : 'tis partly mine own fault,

Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

*Lysander.* Stay, gentle Helena ! hear my excuse : 245

My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena !

*Helena.* O excellent !

*Hermia.* Sweet, do not scorn her so.

*Demetrius.* If she cannot entreat, I can compel,

*Lysander.* Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :  
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers. 250

Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do :

I swear by that which I will lose for thee,

To prove him false that says I love thee not.

*Demetrius.* I say I love thee more than he can do.

*Lysander.* If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too. 255

*Demetrius.* Quick, come !

*Hermia.* Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

*Lysander.* Away, you Ethiop !

*Demetrius.* No, no, he'll . . .

Seem to break loose ; take on, as you would follow,

But yet come not : you are a tame man, go !

*Lysander.* [To HERMIA.] Hang off, thou cat, thou burr !  
vile thing, let loose, 260

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent.

*Hermia.* Why are you grown so rude ? what change is this,  
Sweet love,—

*Lysander.* Thy love ! out, tawny Tartar, out !

Out, loathed medicine ! hated poison, hence !

*Hermia.* Do you not jest ?

*Helena.* Yes, sooth ; and so do you. 265

*Lysander.* Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

*Demetrius.* I would I had your bond, for I perceive  
A weak bond holds you : I'll not trust your word.

*Lysander.* What ! should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead ?  
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

*Hermia.* What ! can you do me greater harm than hate ?  
 Hate me ! wherefore ? O me ! what news, my love ?  
 Am not I *Hermia* ? Are not you *Lysander* ?  
 I am as fair now as I was erewhile.  
 Since night you lov'd me ; yet, since night you left me : 275  
 Why, then you left me,—O, the gods forbid !—  
 In earnest, shall I say ?

*Lysander.* Ay, by my life ;  
 And never did desire to see thee more.  
 Therefore be out of hope, of question, doubt ;  
 Be certain, nothing truer : 'tis no jest, 280  
 That I do hate thee and love *Helena*.

*Hermia.* O me ! you juggler ! you canker-blossom !  
 You thief of love ! what ! have you come by night  
 And stol'n my love's heart from him ?

*Helena.* Fine, i' faith !  
 Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, 285  
 No touch of bashfulness ? What ! will you tear  
 Impatient answers from my gentle tongue ?  
 Fie, fie ! you counterfeit, you puppet you !

*Hermia.* Puppet ! why, so : ay, that way goes the game.  
 Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290  
 Between our statures : she hath urg'd her height ;  
 And with her personage, her tall personage,  
 Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.  
 And are you grown so high in his esteem,  
 Because I am so dwarfish and so low ? 295  
 How low am I, thou painted maypole ? speak ;  
 How low am I ? I am not yet so low  
 But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

*Helena.* I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,  
 Let her not hurt me : I was never curst ; 300  
 I have no gift at all in shrewishness ;  
 I am a right maid for my cowardice :  
 Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,  
 Because she is something lower than myself,  
 That I can match her.

*Hermia.* Lower ! hark, again. 305

*Helena.* Good *Hermia*, do not be so bitter with me.  
 I evermore did love you, *Hermia*,  
 Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you ;  
 Save that, in love unto *Demetrius*,  
 I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310

He follow'd you ; for love I follow'd him ;  
 But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me  
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too :  
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,  
 To Athens will I bear my folly back, 315  
 And follow you no further : let me go :  
 You see how simple and how fond I am.

*Hermia.* Why, get you gone. Who is't that hinders you ?

*Helena.* A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

*Hermia.* What ! with Lysander ?

*Helena.* With Demetrius. 320

*Lysander.* Be not afraid : she shall not harm thee, Helena.

*Demetrius.* No, sir ; she shall not, though you take her part.

*Helena.* O ! when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd.

She was a *vixen* when she went to school :

And though she be but little, she is fierce. 325

*Hermia.* 'Little' again ! nothing but 'low' and 'little !'

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus ?

Let me come to her.

*Lysander.* Get you gone, you dwarf ;

You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made ;

You bead, you acorn !

*Demetrius.* You are too officious 330

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone ; speak not of Helena ;

Take not her part, for, if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

*Lysander.* Now she holds me not ; 335

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,

Or thine or mine, is most in Helena.

*Demetrius.* Follow ! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt* LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS.]

*Hermia.* You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you :

Nay, go not back.

*Helena.* I will not trust you, I, 340

Nor longer stay in your curst company.

Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,

My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*

*Hermia.* I am amaz'd, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*

*Oberon.* This is thy negligence : still thou mistak'st, 345  
 Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully.

*Puck.* Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.



Did not you tell me I should know the man  
By the Athenian garments he had on ?  
And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350  
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;  
And so far am I glad it so did sort,  
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

*Oberon.* Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight :  
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ; 355  
The starry welkin cover thou anon  
With drooping fog as black as Acheron ;  
And lead these testy rivals so astray,  
As one come not within another's way.  
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360  
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;  
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;  
And from each other look thou lead them thus,  
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep  
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep : 365  
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;  
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,  
To take from thence all error with his might,  
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.  
When they next wake, all this derision 370  
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision ;  
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,  
With league whose date till death shall never end.  
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,  
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy ; 375  
And then I will her charmed eye release  
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

*Puck.* My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,  
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,  
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger ; 380  
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,  
Troop home to churchyards : damned spirits all,  
That in cross-ways and floods have burial,  
Already to their wormy beds are gone ;  
For fear lest day should look their shames upon, 385  
They wilfully themselves exile from light,  
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

*Oberon.* But we are spirits of another sort.  
I with the morning's love have oft made sport ;  
And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390

Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,  
 Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,  
 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.  
 But, notwithstanding, haste ; make no delay : 394  
 We may effect this business yet ere day. [*Exit* OBERON.

*Puck.* Up and down, up and down ;  
 I will lead them up and down :  
 I am fear'd in field and town ;  
 Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one. 400

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lys.* Where art thou, proud Demetrius ? speak thou now.

*Puck.* Here, villain ! drawn and ready. Where art thou ?

*Lysander.* I will be with thee straight.

*Puck.* Follow me, then,  
 To plainer ground. [*Exit* LYSANDER as following the voice.

*Re-enter* DEMETRIUS.

*Demetrius.* Lysander ! speak again.

Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled ? 405

Speak ! In some bush ? Where dost thou hide thy head ?

*Puck.* Thou coward ! art thou bragging to the stars,  
 Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,  
 And wilt not come ? Come, recreant ; come, thou child ;  
 I'll whip thee with a rod : he is defil'd 410  
 That draws a sword on thee.

*Demetrius.* Yea, art thou there ?

*Puck.* Follow my voice : we'll try no manhood here.

[*Exeunt.*

*Re-enter* LYSANDER.

*Lysander.* He goes before me and still dares me on :

When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I : 415

I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly ;

That fallen am I in dark uneven way,

And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle day !

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [*Sleeps.* 420

*Re-enter* PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

*Puck.* Ho ! ho ! ho ! Coward, why com'st thou not ?

*Demetrius.* Abide me, if thou dar'st ; for well I wot

Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,  
 And dar'st not stand, nor look me in the face.  
 Where art thou now ?

*Puck.* Come hither : I am here. 425

*Demetrius.* Nay then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy  
this dear,

If ever I thy face by daylight see :  
 Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me  
 To measure out my length on this cold bed : 429  
 By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Re-enter HELENA.*

*Helena.* O weary night ! O long and tedious night,  
 Abate thy hours ! shine, comforts, from the east !  
 That I may back to Athens by daylight,  
 From these that my poor company detest :  
 And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, 435  
 Steal me awhile from mine own company. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* Yet but three ? Come one more ;  
 Two of both kinds make up four.  
 Here she comes, curst and sad :  
 Cupid is a knavish lad, 440  
 Thus to make poor females mad.

*Re-enter HERMIA.*

*Hermia.* Never so weary, never so in woe,  
 Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,  
 I can no further crawl, no further go ;  
 My legs can keep no pace with my desires. 445  
 Here will I rest me till the break of day.  
 Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray !  
 [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

*Puck.* On the ground  
 Sleep sound :  
 I'll apply 450  
 To your eye,  
 Gentle lover, remedy  
 [*Squeezing the juice on* LYSANDER'S eyes.  
 When thou wak'st,  
 Thou tak'st  
 True delight 455  
 In the sight

Of thy former lady's eye :  
 And the country proverb known,  
 That every man should take his own,  
 In your waking shall be shown : 460  
     Jack shall have Jill ;  
     Nought shall go ill ;  
 The man shall have his mare again,  
 And all shall be well. [Exit.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Wood.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA  
 and HERMIA lying asleep.

*Enter* TITANIA and BOTTOM, Fairies attending ; OBERON  
 behind unseen.

*Titania.* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
 While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
 And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
 And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

*Bottom.* Where's Pease-blossom ? 5

*Pease-blossom.* Ready.

*Bottom.* Scratch my head, Pease-blossom. Where's  
 Mounsieur Cobweb ?

*Cobweb.* Ready.

*Bottom.* Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get your 10  
 weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-  
 bee on the top of a thistle ; and, good mounsieur, bring  
 me the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the  
 action, mounsieur ; and, good mounsieur, have a care the 15  
 honey-bag break not ; I would be loath to have you over-  
 flown with a honey-bag, signior. Where's Mounsieur  
 Mustard-seed ?

*Mustard-seed.* Ready.

*Bottom.* Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustard-seed. 20  
 Pray you, leave your curtsy, good mounsieur.

*Mustard-seed.* What's your will ?

*Bottom.* Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help 25  
 Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's,  
 mounsieur, for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the  
 face ; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle  
 me, I must scratch.

*Titania.* What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love? 30

*Bottom.* I have a reasonable good ear in music : let us have the tongs and the bones.

*Titania.* Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat. 35

*Bottom.* Truly, a peck of provender : I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay : good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.

*Titania.* I have a venturous fairy that shall seek 40  
The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee thence new nuts.

*Bottom.* I had rather have a handful or two of dried pease. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me : I have an exposition of sleep come upon me. 45

*Titania.* Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt Fairies.* So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle Gently entwist ; the female ivy so Enrings the barky fingers of the elm. 50  
O ! how I love thee ; how I dote on thee ! [*They sleep.*

*Enter PUCK.*

*Oberon.* [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight ?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity :  
For, meeting her of late behind the wood,  
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool, 55  
I did upbraid her and fall out with her ;  
For she his hairy temples then had rounded  
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers ;  
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds  
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls, 60  
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes  
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.  
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,  
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,  
I then did ask of her her changeling child ; 65  
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent  
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.  
And now I have the boy, I will undo  
This hateful imperfection of her eyes :  
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp 70  
From off the head of this Athenian swain,  
That he, awaking when the other do,  
May all to Athens back again repair,



And think no more of this night's accidents  
 But as the fierce vexation of a dream.  
 But first I will release the fairy queen.

75

*[Touching her eyes with an herb.]*

Be as thou wast wont to be ;  
 See as thou wast wont to see :  
 Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower  
 Hath such force and blessed power.

80

Now, my Titania ; wake you, my sweet queen.

*Titania.* My Oberon ! what visions have I seen !  
 Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

*Oberon.* There lies your love.

*Titania.* How came these things to pass ?  
 O ! how mine eyes do loathe his visage now.

85

*Oberon.* Silence, awhile. Robin, take off this head.  
 Titania, music call ; and strike more dead  
 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

*Titania.* Music, ho ! music ! such as charmeth sleep. *[Music.]*

*Puck.* When thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes peep.

*Oberon.* Sound, music ! *[Still, music.]* Come, my queen,  
 take hands with me,

91

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,

And will to-morrow midnight solemnly

Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly,

95

And bless it to all fair prosperity.

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be

Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

*Puck.* Fairy king, attend, and mark :

I do hear the morning lark.

100

*Oberon.* Then, my queen, in silence sad,

Trip we after the night's shade ;

We the globe can compass soon,

Swifter than the wandering moon.

*Titania.* Come, my lord ; and in our flight

105

Tell me how it came this night

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground.

*[Exeunt. Horns winded within.]*

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and Train.*

*Theseus.* Go, one of you, find out the forester ;

For now our observation is perform'd ;

110

And since we have the vaward of the day,  
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.  
Uncouple in the western valley ; let them go :  
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.  
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top,  
And mark the musical confusion  
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

*Hippolyta.* I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,  
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear  
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear  
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,  
The skies, the fountains, every region near  
Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard  
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

*Theseus.* My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind, 125  
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;  
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;  
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more tuneable 130  
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,  
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:  
Judge, when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?

*Egeus.* My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;  
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;  
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:  
I wonder of their being here together.

*Theseus.* No doubt they rose up early to observe  
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,  
Came here in grace of our solemnity. 140  
But speak, Egeus, is not this the day  
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

*Egeus.* It is, my lord.

*Theseus.* Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.  
[*Horns and shout within.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA,  
and HELENA, wake and start up.]

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past : 145  
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now ?

*Lysander.* Pardon, my lord. [*He and the rest kneel.*]

*Theseus.* I pray you all, stand up.

I know you two are rival enemies :  
How comes this gentle concord in the world,  
That hatred is so far from jealousy,

150

To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity ?

*Lysander.* My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
Half sleep, half waking : but as yet, I swear,  
I cannot truly say how I came here ;  
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak, 155  
And now I do bethink me, so it is,—  
I came with Hermia hither : our intent  
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,  
Without the peril of the Athenian law—

*Egeus.* Enough, enough, my lord ; you have enough : 160  
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.  
They would have stol'n away ; they would, Demetrius,  
Thereby to have defeated you and me ;  
You of your wife, and me of my consent,  
Of my consent that she should be your wife. 165

*Demetrius.* My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,  
Of this their purpose hither, to this wood ;  
And I in fury hither follow'd them,  
Fair Helena in fancy following me.  
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,— 170  
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,  
Melted as doth the snow, seems to me now  
As the remembrance of an idle gaud *bright*  
Which in my childhood I did dote upon ;  
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart, 175  
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,  
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,

Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia :

But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food ;  
But, as in health, come to my natural taste, 180  
Now do I wish it, love it, long for it,  
And will for evermore be true to it.

*Theseus.* Fair lovers, you are fortunately met :  
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.  
*Egeus,* I will overbear your will, *not have his own way* 185  
For in the temple, by and by, with us,  
These couples shall eternally be knit :  
And, for the morning now is something worn,  
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside.  
Away with us, to Athens : three and three, 190  
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.  
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt* THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and Train.

*Demetrius.* These things seem small and undistinguishable,  
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds. *not to be*

*Hermia.* Methinks I see these things with parted eye, 195 *under*  
When everything seems double.

*Helena.* So methinks :  
And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,  
Mine own, and not mine own.

*Demetrius.* Are you sure  
That we are awake ? It seems to me  
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do you not think 200  
The duke was here, and bid us follow him ?

*Hermia.* Yea ; and my father.

*Helena.* And Hippolyta.

*Lysander.* And he did bid us follow to the temple.

*Demetrius.* Why then, we are awake. Let's follow him ;  
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.* 205

*Bottom.* [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and  
I will answer : my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-  
ho ! Peter Quince ! Flute, the bellows-mender ! Snout,  
the tinker ! Starveling ! God's my life ! stolen hence,  
and left me asleep ! I have had a most rare vision. I have 210  
had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it  
was : man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this  
dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what.  
Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but 215  
a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had.  
The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not  
seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to con-  
ceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will 220  
get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream : it shall  
be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom ;  
and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the  
duke : peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall 225  
sing it at her death. *perhaps* [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Athens. A Room in QUINCE'S House.*

*Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.*

*Quince.* Have you sent to Bottom's house ? is he  
come home yet ?

*Starveling.* He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he  
is transported.

*made unnatural*

*Flute.* If he come not, then the play is marred : it goes 5  
not forward, doth it ?

*Quince.* It is not possible : you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

*Flute.* No ; he hath simply the best wit of any handi- 10  
craft man in Athens.

*Quince.* Yea, and the best person too ; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

*Flute.* You must say, ' paragon ' : a paramour is, God 15  
bless us ! a thing of naught.

*Enter SNUG.*

*Snug.* Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married : if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

*Flute.* O sweet bully Bottom ! Thus hath he lost 20  
sixpence a day during his life ; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day : an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged ; he would have deserved it : sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing. 25

*Enter BOTTOM.*

*Bottom.* Where are these lads ? where are these hearts ?

*Quince.* Bottom ! O most courageous day ! O most happy hour !

*Bottom.* Masters, I am to discourse wonders : but ask 30  
me not what ; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.

*Quince.* Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

*Bottom.* Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, 35  
that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps ; meet presently at the palace ; every man look o'er his part ; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen ; and let not him 40  
that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath, and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No 45  
more words : away ! go ; away. [*Exeunt.*



## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Athens. An Apartment in the Palace of THESEUS.**Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, and Attendants.**Hippolyta.* 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.*Theseus.* More strange than true. I never may believe These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever comprehends.

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,Are of imagination all compact:

One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,

That is, the madman; the lover, all as frantic,See Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;

And, as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name.

Such tricks hath strong imagination,

That, if it would but apprehend some joy,

It comprehends some bringer of that joy;

Or in the night, imagining some fear,

How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear!

*Hippolyta.* But all the story of the night told over,

And all their minds transfigur'd so together,

More witnesseth than fancy's images,

And grows to something of great constancy,

But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

*Theseus.* Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.*Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA.*

Joy, gentle friends! joy, and fresh days of love

Accompany your hearts!

*Lysander.*

More than to us

Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

*Theseus.* Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have,

To wear away this long age of three hours

Helen of Troy

lover  
rich  
beauty  
fancy

68

" " " " " " " " " " " "

" "

Between our after-supper and bed-time ?  
Where is our usual manager of mirth ? 35  
What revels are in hand ? Is there no play,  
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour ?  
Call Philostrate.

*Philostrate.* Here, mighty Theseus.

*Theseus.* Say, what abridgment have you for this evening ?  
What masque ? what music ? How shall we beguile 40  
The lazy time, if not with some delight ?

*Philostrate.* There is a brief how many sports are ripe ;  
Make choice of which your highness will see first. [*Gives a paper.*]

*Theseus.* *The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung*  
*By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.* 45

We'll none of that : that have I told my love,  
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

*The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,*  
*Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.*  
That is an old device ; and it was play'd 50

When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.  
*The thrice three Muses mourning for the death*  
*Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary.*

That is some satire keen and critical,  
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony. 55

*A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus*  
*And his love Thisbe ; very tragical mirth.*

Merry and tragical ! tedious and brief !  
That is, hot ice and wonderous strange snow.  
How shall we find the concord of this discord ? 60

*Philostrate.* A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,  
Which is as brief as I have known a play ;  
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,  
Which makes it tedious ; for in all the play  
There is not one word apt, one player fitted. 65

And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;  
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.  
Which when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,  
Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears  
The passion of loud laughter never shed. 70

*Theseus.* What are they that do play it ?

*Philostrate.* Hard-handed men, that work in Athens here,  
Which never labour'd in their minds till now,  
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories  
With this same play, against your nuptial. 75

*Theseus.* And we will hear it.

*Philostrate.* No, my noble lord ;

It is not for you : I have heard it over,  
And it is nothing, nothing in the world ;  
Unless you can find sport in their intents  
Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain, 80  
To do you service.

*Theseus.* I will hear that play ;

For never anything can be amiss,  
When simpleness and duty tender it.

Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit PHILOSTRATE.*

*Hippolyta.* I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd, 85  
And duty in his service perishing.

*Theseus.* Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

*Hippolyta.* He says they can do nothing in this kind.

*Theseus.* The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.  
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake : 90  
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect  
Takes it in might, not merit.

Where I have come, great clerks have purposed  
To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;

Where I have seen them shiver and look pale, 95  
Make periods in the midst of sentences,

Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears,

And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,

Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,  
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ; 100

And in the modesty of fearful duty

I read as much as from the rattling tongue

Of saucy and audacious eloquence.

Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity

In least speak most, to my capacity. 105

*Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.*

*Philostrate.* So please your Grace, the Prologue is address'd.

*Theseus.* Let him approach. [*Flourish of Trumpets.*

*Enter QUINCE for the Prologue.*

*Prologue.* If we offend, it is with our good will.

That you should think, we come not to offend,

But with good will. To show our simple skill, 110

That is the true beginning of our end.

*Consider then we come but in despite.*

*We do not come as minding to content you,  
Our true intent is. All for your delight,*

*We are not here. That you should here repent you, 115  
The actors are at hand ; and, by their show,  
You shall know all that you are like to know.*

*Theseus.* This fellow doth not stand upon points.

*Lysander.* He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ;  
he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord : it is not 120  
enough to speak, but to speak true.

*Hippolyta.* Indeed he hath played on his prologue like  
a child on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government. 125

*Theseus.* His speech was like a tangled chain ; nothing  
impaired, but all disordered. Who is next ?

*Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE,  
and LION, as in dumb show.*

*Prologue.* Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;  
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain. 130

*This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;*

*This beauteous lady Thisby is, certain.*

*This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present*

*Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder ;  
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content 135*

*To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.*

*This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,*

*Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know,*

*By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn*

*To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo. 140*

*This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,*

*The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,*

*Did scare away, or rather did affright ;*

*And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,*

*Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain. 145*

*Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,*

*And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :*

*Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,*

*He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;*

*And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade, 150*

*His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,*

*Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain,*

*At large discourse, while here they do remain.*

*[Exeunt PROL., PYR., THISBE, LION, and MOONSHINE.]*

*Theseus.* I wonder, if the lion be to speak.

*Demetrius.* No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when 155  
many asses do.

*Wall.* *In this same interlude it doth befall*

*That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;*

*And such a wall, as I would have you think,*

*That had in it a crannied hole or chink,* 160

*Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,*  
*Did whisper often very secretly.*

*This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show*

*That I am that same wall ; the truth is so ;*

*And this the cranny is, right and sinister,* 165

*Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.*

*Theseus.* Would you desire lime and hair to speak  
better ?

*Demetrius.* It is the wittiest partition that ever I  
heard discourse, my lord.

*Theseus.* Pyramus draws near the wall : silence ! 170

*Re-enter PYRAMUS.*

*Pyramus.* *O grim-look'd night ! O night with hue so black !*

*O night, which ever art when day is not !*

*O night ! O night ! alack, alack, alack !*

*I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot.* 175

*And thou, O wall ! O sweet, O lovely wall !*

*That stand'st between her father's ground and mine ;*

*Thou wall, O wall ! O sweet, and lovely wall !*

*Show me thy chink to blink through with mine eyne.*

[WALL holds up his fingers.]

*Thanks, courteous wall : Jove shield thee well for this !* 180

*But what see I ? No Thisby do I see.*

*O wicked wall ! through whom I see no bliss ;*

*Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me !*

*Theseus.* The wall, methinks, being sensible, should  
curse again. 185

*Pyramus.* No, in truth, sir, he should not. ' Deceiving  
me,' is Thisby's cue : she is to enter now, and I am to spy  
her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as  
I told you. Yonder she comes. 190

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*Thisbe.* *O wall ! full often hast thou heard my moans,*

*For parting my fair Pyramus and me :*



*My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,  
Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.*

*Pyramus. I see a voice : now will I to the chink,* 195  
*To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face.*

*Thisby !*

*Thisby. My love ! thou art my love, I think.*

*Pyramus. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace ;*  
*And, like Limander, am I trusty still.* 200

*Thisby. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.*

*Pyramus. Not ~~Shafalus~~ to Procrus was so true.*

*Thisby. As ~~Shafalus~~ to Procrus : I to you.*

*Pyramus. O ! kiss me through the hole of this vile wall.*

*Thisby. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.* 205

*Pyramus. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway ?*

*Thisby. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.*

[*Exeunt PYRAMUS and THISBE.*

*Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so ;*  
*And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.* [*Exit.*

*Theseus. Now is the mural down between the two* 210  
*neighbours.*

*Demetrius. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so*  
*wilful to hear without warning.*

*Hippolyta. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.*

*Theseus. The best in this kind are but shadows, and* 215  
*the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.*

*Hippolyta. It must be your imagination then, and*  
*not theirs.*

*Theseus. If we imagine no worse of them than they of* 220  
*themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come*  
*two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.*

*Re-enter LION and MOONSHINE.*

*Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear*

*The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,*  
*May now perchance both quake and tremble here,*

*When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.*

*Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am*

*A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam :*

*For, if I should as lion come in strife* 230

*Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.*

*Theseus. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.*

*Demetrius. The very best at a beast, my lord, that*  
*e'er I saw.* 235

*Lysander.* This lion is a very fox for his valour.

*Theseus.* True ; and a goose for his discretion.

*Demetrius.* Not so, my lord ; for his valour cannot carry his discretion, and the fox carries the goose. 240

*Theseus.* His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour, for the goose carries not the fox. It is well : leave it to his discretion, and let us listen to the moon.

*Moon.* *This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;—* 245

*Demetrius.* He should have worn the horns on his head.

*Theseus.* He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible within the circumference.

*Moon.* *This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;* 250  
*Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.*

*Theseus.* This is the greatest error of all the rest. The man should be put into the lanthorn : how is it else the man i' the moon ?

*Demetrius.* He dares not come there for the candle ; for, you see, it is already in snuff. 256

*Hippolyta.* I am awearry of this moon : would he would change !

*Theseus.* It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane ; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time. 260

*Lysander.* Proceed, Moon.

*Moon.* All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon ; I, the man in the moon ; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush ; and this dog, my dog. 265

*Demetrius.* Why, all these should be in the lanthorn ; for all these are in the moon. But, silence ! here comes Thisbe.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*Thisbe.* *This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love ?* 270

*Lion.* [Roaring.] Oh—. [THISBE runs off.]

*Demetrius.* Well roared, Lion.

*Theseus.* Well run, Thisbe.

*Hippolyta.* Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. 275

[The LION tears THISBE'S mantle, and exit.]

*Theseus.* Well moused, Lion.

*Demetrius.* And then came Pyramus.

*Lysander.* And so the lion vanished.

*Re-enter PYRAMUS.*

*Pyramus.* Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;

I thank thee, moon, for shining now so bright, 280  
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering streams,  
I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here! 285

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What! stain'd with blood! 290

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

*Theseus.* This passion, and the death of a dear friend, 295  
would go near to make a man look sad.

*Hippolyta.* Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

*Pyramus.* Oh! wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions  
frame?

Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear?

Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame 300

That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer.

Come tears, confound;

Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus:

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop: 305

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. [Stabs himself.

Now am I dead,

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky: 310

Tongue, lose thy light!

Moon, take thy flight! [Exit MOONSHINE.

Now die, die, die, die, die. [Dies.

*Demetrius.* No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but  
one. 315

*Lysander.* Less than an ace, man, for he is dead; he is  
nothing.

*Theseus.* With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

*Hippolyta.* How chance Moonshine is gone before 320  
Thisbe comes back and finds her lover ?

*Theseus.* She will find him by starlight. Here she comes ; and her passion ends the play.

*Re-enter THISBE.*

*Hippolyta.* Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus : I hope she will be brief. 325

*Demetrius.* A mote will turn the balance, which  
Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better ; he for a man, God  
warrant us ; she for a woman, God bless us. } 41

*Lysander.* She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes. 330

*Demetrius.* And thus she moans, *videlicet* :—

*Thisbe.* *Asleep, my love ?*

*What, dead, my dove ?*

*O Pyramus, arise !*

*Speak, speak ! Quite dumb ?* 335

*Dead, dead ! A tomb*

*Must cover thy sweet eyes.*

*These lily lips,*

*This cherry nose,*

*These yellow cowslip cheeks,* 340

*Are gone, are gone :*

*Lovers, make moan !*

*His eyes were green as leeks.*

*O, Sisters Three,*

*Come, come to me,* 345

*With hands as pale as milk ;*

*Lay them in gore,*

*Since you have shore*

*With shears his thread of silk.*

*Tongue, not a word :* 350

*Come, trusty sword :*

*Come, blade, my breast imbrue : [Stabs herself,*

*And farewell, friends ;*

*Thus Thisbe ends :*

*Adieu, adieu, adieu.* [Dies. 355

*Theseus.* Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

*Demetrius.* Ay, and Wall too.

*Bottom.* No, I assure you ; the wall is down that parted

their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to 360  
hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company ?

*Theseus.* No epilogue, I pray you ; for your play needs  
no excuse. Never excuse ; for when the players are all  
dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that 365  
writ it had played Pyramus, and hanged himself in  
Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy : and so  
it is, truly, and very notably discharged. But come, your  
Bergomask : let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.* 370

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve ;

Lovers, to bed ; 'tis almost fairy time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn,  
As much as we this night have overwatch'd. 375

This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels, and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II.

*Enter PUCK.*

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,  
And the wolf behowls the moon ;  
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,  
All with weary task fordone.  
Now the wasted brands do glow, 5  
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,  
Puts the wretch that lies in woe  
In remembrance of a shroud.  
Now it is the time of night  
That the graves, all gaping wide, 10  
Every one lets forth his sprite,  
In the church-way paths to glide :  
And we fairies, that do run  
By the triple *Hecate's* team,  
From the presence of the sun, 15  
Following darkness like a dream,  
Now are frolic ; not a mouse  
Shall disturb this hallow'd house :  
I am sent with broom before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door. 20



*Enter OBERON and TITANIA, with their Train.*

*Oberon.* Through the house give glimmering light  
 By the dead and drowsy fire ;  
 Every elf and fairy sprite  
 Hop as light as bird from brier ;  
 And this ditty after me 25  
 Sing and dance it trippingly.

*Titania.* First, rehearse your song by rote,  
 To each word a warbling note :  
 Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
 Will we sing, and bless this place. 30  
*[Song and dance.]*

*Oberon.* Now, until the break of day,  
 Through this house each fairy stray.  
 To the best bride-bed will we,  
 Which by us shall blessed be ;  
 And the issue there create 35  
 Ever shall be fortunate.  
 So shall all the couples three  
 Ever true in loving be ;  
 And the blots of Nature's hand  
 Shall not in their issue stand : 40  
 Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,  
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are  
 Despised in nativity,  
 Shall upon their children be.  
 With this field-dew consecrate, 45  
 Every fairy take his gait  
 And each several chamber bless,  
 Through this palace, with sweet peace ;  
 And the owner of it blest,  
 Ever shall in safety rest. 50

Trip away ;

Make no stay ;

Meet me all by break of day.

*[Exeunt OBERON, TITANIA, and Train.]*

*Puck.* If we shadows have offended,  
 Think but this, and all is mended, 55  
 That you have but slumber'd here  
 While these visions did appear.  
 And this weak and idle theme,  
 No more yielding but a dream,

Gentles, do not reprehend : *criticise* 60  
If you pardon, we will mend.  
And, as I'm an honest Puck,  
If we have unearned luck  
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,  
We will make amends ere long ; 65  
Else the Puck a liar call :  
So, good night unto you all.  
Give me your hands, if we be friends,  
And Robin shall restore amends. [Exit.

## NOTES

ACT I, SCENE I. 4. *lingers*, used transitively = makes linger, delays.

13. *pert*, brisk. Cp. *Tempest*, iv. i. 58: 'Now come, my Ariel! . . . appear, and pertly!'

15. *companion*. Used contemptuously, like 'fellow' now.

*pomp*. Used especially of the spectacular or processional part of a festival: the original sense, from Greek *πομπή* (*pompē*), a procession. So l. 19.

16. *I woo'd thee with my sword*. Theseus had just conquered the Amazons.

19. *triumph*: a public exhibition or show in celebration of some event (originally of a victory in war).

32. *sto'l'n the impression of her fantasy*, dishonestly caught her fantasy or fancy and stamped his image there.

33. *gawds*, baubles, toys.

*conceits*, fanciful devices. To 'conceit' then meant to 'conceive'; and the noun 'conceit' meant 'conception' or 'something conceived', fancy, or idea.

34. *knacks*, knick-knacks.

46. *be advised*, i. e. deliberate. To do a thing 'on advice' then meant to do it on deliberation, or, as we say, 'advisedly.'

50. *within his power* = (it is) within his power. A number of examples of this ellipse might be quoted from Shakespeare: e. g. *Macbeth*, iv. iii. 16: 'And [it is] wisdom To offer up a weak poor innocent lamb.' So *As You Like It*, i. i. 15, &c. It occurs in the hurry of speech, when the speaker is hastening to a conclusion.

54. *in this kind*, in this respect. So *As You Like It*, ii. i. 27, &c.

60. *concern*, touch, affect.

65. *to die the death*: i. e. 'the death prescribed by law'.

69. *Whe'r*, for 'whether': spelt as pronounced.

71. *mew'd*, cooped up (from Fr. *mue*, a coop in which fowls were fattened).

75. *pilgrimage*. In the Scriptural sense of our 'pilgrimage through life.'

76. *But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd*. The rose which renders up its essence of sweetness has more earthly happiness.

80. *virgin patent*, i. e. the privilege of virginity. Privileges were conferred by letters patent.

89. *protest*, solemnly profess.

92. *crazed*, with a flaw in it.

98. *estate*, settle (as an estate). So in *As You Like It*, v. ii. 3, *Tempest*, iv. i. 85, &c.

100. *As well possess'd*, as well furnished with possessions.

106. *avouch it to his head*. We should say, 'to his face.'

110. *spotted*: the opposite of 'spotless'.

120. *extenuate*, minimize, mitigate: the original sense (Lat. *ex-tenuare*, from *ex-* and *tenuis*, slight).

129. *How chance the roses*, &c. For 'How chances it the roses', &c. Cp. v. i. 320.

131. *Beteem*, allow, permit: with a reference, probably, to the other sense of 'pour', which survives in North English and Scots dialects.

136. *O cross!* 'Cross' here means 'that which crosses or thwarts', 'vexation'.

137. *misgraffed*, misgrafted.

141. *sympathy*, agreement, correspondence: to be distinguished from the modern sense. So 'sympathize with' = to be like, in *Henry V*, III. vii. 163.

143. *momentany*, momentary (Fr. *momentané*, Lat. *momentaneus*).

145. *collied*, grimy, sooty (lit., made 'colly' or black with coal-dust).

146. *in a spleen*, in a sudden fit.

155. *fancy's followers*. 'Fancy' = love. So II. i. 164, III. ii. 96, &c.

157. *revenue*: to be read 'révénue'.

160. *respects*, regards, considers. Cp. II. i. 224.

167. *To do observance to a morn of May*, i. e. to go a-maying.

170. *his best arrow with the golden head*. Cupid's arrows were said to be of two sorts: those tipped with gold, to incite love, and those tipped with lead, to repel it.

171. *Venus' doves*. The chariot of Venus, Cupid's mother, was drawn by doves. Cp. *Tempest*, iv. i. 92:

'I met her deity  
Cutting the clouds towards Paphos, and her son  
Dove-drawn with her.'

173-4. Queen Dido of Carthage, who burned herself alive after Aeneas the Trojan deserted her for Italy. The story is told in the Fourth Book of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

182. *your fair*, i. e. your fairness or beauty. Cp. *As You Like It*, III. ii. 99: 'Let no face be kept in mind But the fair of Rosalind.' Or *Venus and Adonis*, l. 589: 'Whereat a sudden pale [i. e. paleness] . . . Usurps her cheek.' In Shakespeare's usage almost any adjective could be made to do duty as a noun, just as any noun almost might be made to do duty as a verb. The parts of speech were highly interchangeable.

184. *tuneable*, tuneful. The word is active here, and in iv. i. 130.

So in *Richard II*, II. iii. 84, 'deceivable' (which now means 'capable of being deceived') is used to mean 'capable of deceit', 'deceitful'.

186. *favour*, outward appearance (especially of the face): with a play on the other sense of the word.

190. *bated*, excepted.

191. *translated*, transformed. Cp. III. i. 125, &c.

209. *Phoebe*: a name for the moon. See v. ii. 14 *n*.

212. *still*, ever, continually.

215. *Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie*. 'Faint' gives the note of the line: it is not so much the primroses as those who lie upon them who are faint. Cp. *As You Like It*, II. vii. 132: 'Oppress'd with two weak evils, age and hunger.' Here 'weak' in the same way gives the note of the line: it is the person oppressed who is 'weak', not the 'evils', and it is precisely his 'weakness' which the speaker wishes to emphasize. Shakespeare is very fond of these 'colouring-epithets'.

219. *stranger companies*. 'Companies' = companions (as in *Henry V*, I. i. 55, &c.); and the phrase means 'companions who are strangers'.

226. *other some*, i.e. others. We say, not 'other some', but 'some others'.

232. *holding no quantity*, holding no proportion to love's estimation of them, i.e. far below love's estimation of them. Cp. *Hamlet*, III. ii. 179: 'women's fear and love holds quantity' (i.e. are in direct proportion to each other, so that the more women love the more they fear).

242. *eyne*, eyes: the OE. plural. So II. ii. 99, &c. It is used for the rhyme.

249. *If I have thanks, it is a dear expense*, i.e., the thanks are dearly bought.

251. *his sight*, the sight of him.

ACT I, SCENE II. 2. *You were best*: an idiom grammatically = 'for you it were best'.

3. *scrip*, scrip or script, i.e. the scroll or written list.

5. *interlude*. The name for a short and usually light dramatic piece, such as was often acted at this time in the houses of noblemen and wealthy merchants. The word means a dramatic diversion (Lat. *inter*, and *ludus*, play).

12. *Pyramus and Thisby*. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe was drawn from Ovid's tale in the *Metamorphoses*, IV. 55.

29. *condole*, mourn, lament. So I. 44.

31. *I could play Ercles*, i.e. Hercules. This was a stock ranting part in the old plays.

32. *a part to tear a cat in*, i.e. a violent ranting part. Cp. Middleton's *Roaring Girl*, v. i.: 'I am called by those who have seen my valour, Tear-cat' (Steevens).

38. *Phibbus' car*, the car of Phoebus, the sun-god.



44. *condoling*. Cp. l. 29 above.

84. *aggravate my voice*. Mrs. Quickly misuses the words in the same way: 'I beseech you now, aggravate your choler' (2 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 175). Bottom and she mean just the contrary of what they say.

97. *purple-in-grain*, i. e. natural purple, that will not wash out.

98. *French-crown colour*: the colour of the French gold crown-piece.

103. *con*, learn by heart.

109. *bill of properties*, list of theatrical 'properties' or stage requisites.

112. *obscenely*. Misused also by Costard in *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. i. 145: 'when it comes so smoothly off, so obscenely as it were, so fit.' Cp. 'aggravate', l. 84 above. These words from the Latin were even more in vogue in Shakespeare's day than in Sheridan's, and were equally maltreated by ambitious ignorance. Sheridan's Mrs. Malaprop, in his play *The Rivals*, has given a name to the type.

115. *hold, or cut bow-strings*. Hold (i. e. keep your engagement) or cut your bowstrings and give up archery (i. e. throw up the game).

ACT II, SCENE I. 7. *the moone's sphere*, the moon's orbit. Sound the 'e' of 'moone's.' It is a survival of the old English genitive in -es.

9. *orbs*, the fairy rings. Rings on the grass were thought to be due to their dancing. Cp. l. 86; and *Tempest*, v. i. 37 (Prospero's address to the elves and fairies): 'you demi-puppets, that By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make.'

10. *pensioners*, bodyguard: with a reference to Queen Elizabeth's splendid bodyguard of 'pensioners' drawn from the noblest and handsomest young men about the court.

16. *lob*, lubber, lout.

20. *fell*, fierce.

*wrath*, wroth: used for the sake of the rhyme.

23. *changeling*. A child left or taken by the fairies in place of another.

29. *starlight sheen*. 'Sheen' is probably a substantive = shining, brightness; and 'starlight' an adjective.

30. *square*, quarrel, brawl. So we talk in this sense of 'squaring up'

33. *shrewd*, mischievous (lit. 'cursed').

34-6. 'Skim', 'labour', &c., refer to 'you' in l. 34. 'Frights' alone refers to 'he' in l. 34.

36. *quern*, handmill.

38. *Sometime*. 'Sometime' and 'sometimes' are used indifferently.

*barm*, yeast. Still common in dialect.

47. *a gossip's bowl*. 'Gossip' or 'godsib' meant originally a sponsor at a christening; and so, as here, a crony. Cp. Fr. *commère*.

48. *a roasted crab*, i. e. crab-apple, put in to flavour the liquor.

50. *dewlap*: properly the loose skin which hangs from the throats of cattle.

51. *aunt*: familiar for an old woman. 'Mother' is still so used.

53-4. *down topples she, And 'tailor' cries*. Because in such a case one 'falls as a tailor squats upon his board' (Johnson).

55. *quire*, company: the same word as 'choir', from Lat. *chorus*.  
*loff*, laugh: spelt as pronounced.

56. *waxen*, old plural = wax, i. e. increase.  
*neeze*, sneeze (OE. *niesan*).

57. *wasted*, consumed, spent (not necessarily without profit, as in the modern use of the word). Cp. *As You Like It*, II. iv. 95-6: 'I like this place, And willingly could waste my time in it.' So in v. ii. 5 below, 'wasted brands' does not mean that the brands have not been of service, but simply that they have burned out.

66-8. *Corin . . . Phillida*. These were stock literary names for a shepherd and a shepherdess.

71. *Your buskin'd mistress*, &c., i. e. wearing the 'buskin' or long hunting boot. The Amazons were huntresses and warriors.

76. *Glance at*, hint at, covertly attack.

79-80. Aegle was a nymph for the love of whom Theseus deserted Ariadne of Crete, who had helped him to slay the Minotaur. Antiopa was an Amazon and daughter of Mars, in love with Theseus.

82. *the middle summer's spring*, the beginning of midsummer.

84. *paved fountain*: not artificially paved, but with a hard pebbly bottom.

86. *ringlets*, rings or rounds. Cp. l. 9 n.

91. *pelting*, paltry. Cp. *Richard II*, II. i. 60, where Gaunt complains that England had been leased out to taxgatherers, 'like to a tenement, or pelting farm.'

92. *continents*, i. e. what contains them, their banks (Lat. *continere*, *continens*).

97. *murrion flock*, the 'murrain' flock, i. e. the cattle dead of this disease.

98. *Nine men's morris*. A country game, also called 'nine men's merrils', played on turf cut into figures. Each party had nine men, and the counters played with were called 'Merrils' (Fr. *merelles*).

99. *the quaint mazes*, &c., labyrinths on the village green. It was a sport with boys to run courses over them. 'Quaint' = artfully contrived, ingenious. Cp. II. ii. 7 below.

*the wanton green*. 'Wanton' here = playful, sportive: and so frequently in Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

101. *want their winter*, i. e. their winter pastimes.

106. *distemperature*, disorder of the weather. 'Thorough', of course, = through, as in the opening lines of the scene.

109. *Hiems*: the Latin name for Winter.

112. *childing autumn*, i.e. autumn that brings forth.

114. *By their increase*, by their products.

117. *original*, source or origin.

161. *might see*, could, was able to see. 'May' and 'might' then meant what 'can' and 'could' mean now. Cp. *Merchant of Venice*, III. ii. 161-3: 'Happy in this, she is not yet so old But she *may* learn; happier than this, She is not bred so dull but she *can* learn.' Here 'may' = has it in her power to; 'can' = has the knowledge or skill to. This is the original distinction. Cp. v. i. 2 ('may').

163. *the imperial votaress*. A compliment to Elizabeth, the virgin queen. The goddess of the moon is the virgin Diana or Phoebe (see v. ii. 14 n.), of whom Elizabeth is regarded as a votaress.

164. *fancy-free*, i.e. heart-free, or free from the power of love. For 'fancy' cp. I. i. 155.

168. *Love-in-idleness*: the pansy or heartsease.

174. *the leviathan*: here meant for the whale.

192. *wood*, mad (OE. *wōd*). Cp. Scots 'wud'.

195. *adamant*, the loadstone, which draws iron to it (cp. next line). Its proverbial hardness is also alluded to.

201. *nor I cannot*: emphatic double negative.

208. *worser*. This sort of double comparative is not uncommon in Shakespeare's time. Cp. 'lesser', II. ii. 89.

214. *impeach*, bring into question, or expose to detraction.

220. *my privilege*, i.e. that which secures me immunity.

224. *in my respect*, in my regard. Cp. I. i. 160.

231. *Apollo flies*, &c. Reference to Apollo's pursuit of the nymph Daphne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, i. 452 f.).

232. *griffin*: a fabulous monster, half beast, half bird of prey.

235. *stay thy questions*, wait and talk with you. 'Question,' here and often elsewhere in Shakespeare, means simply 'discourse', 'discussion', 'conversation'. Cp. *Merchant of Venice*, IV. i. 346: 'I'll stay no longer question' (= I will discuss no longer with you).

244. *to die upon the hand*. Cp. the phrase 'to die upon his sword', &c.

252. *eglantine*, sweet-briar.

256. *weed*, dress (OE. *wæd*). Cp. II. ii. 71.

266. *fond on her*, i.e. foolishly doting upon her. Cp. II. ii. 88.

ACT II, SCENE II. 1. *roundel*, round (cp. II. i. 140) or roundelay. That is, either a part song, or (as here) a round dance.

4. *rere-mice*, bats (OE. *hrere-mus*).

7. *quaint*, dainty, artful, elegant. Cp. II. i. 99 above; and *Tempest*, I. ii. 317: 'Fine apparition! My quaint Ariel.'

9. *double tongue*, i.e. forked tongue.

13. *Philomel*. The nightingale, from Philomela, the unfortunate daughter of Pandion, who was transformed into one.

30. *ounce*: loosely used for the smaller animals of the leopard species.

*cat*, wild cat.

31. *Pard*, leopard.

45. *take the sense . . . of my innocence*, i. e. understand my innocent meaning.

46. *Love takes the meaning*, &c., i. e. the proper meaning. For 'take' cp. v. i. 90.

54. *beshrew*, plague upon (lit. 'curse'): a playful oath. Connected with 'shrewd', in its original meaning (see II. i. 33 and III. ii. 300).

68. *approve*, prove, confirm.

71. *Weeds*. Cp. II. i. 256.

79. *owe*, own, possess. Cp. *Tempest*, I. ii. 451: 'Thou dost here usurp The name thou ow'st not.'

86. *darkling*, in the dark.

88. *fond*, foolish, with the sense of 'doting', which it has in II. i. 266.

97. *Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus*. 'As a monster' is in apposition with 'my presence'.

99. *sphery eyne*, eyes like the spheres or stars. For 'eyne' cp. I. i. 242.

118. *ripe not to reason*, do not grow ripe or mature in reason.

119. *the point of human skill*, i. e. the highest point of human skill.

132. *gentleness*, gentlemanliness.

140. *hated . . . of*. 'Of' = by. So I. 142.

154. *Of all loves*, by all that is loving.

*Swound*, swoon.

156. *Either*: to be sounded as one syllable. Cp. 'whe'r' for 'whether' (III. i. 160): spelt as pronounced.

ACT III, SCENE I. 2. *pat*, exactly.

4. *tiring-house*, dressing-room.

7. *bully*, a slang term meaning a dashing, fine fellow.

14. *By'r lakin*, by our ladykin or little lady, i. e. the Virgin. A common oath.

*parlous*: a form of 'perilous', used as we use 'awful', 'terrible'.

25. *in eight and six*, i. e. in verses of alternate eight and six syllables. This was the ordinary ballad-metre.

40. *to the same defect*. A commentator must not spoil these blunders by explaining them. Cp. I. ii. 112 n; and below, I. 64 ('disfigure') &c.

45. *it were pity of my life*. A common exclamation, = it were a pitiful thing for my life, i. e. my life would be a pitiful business.

65. *present*, represent: a players' term. Cp. III. ii. 14.

84. *a play toward*, i. e. coming on.

100. *juvenal*, youth (Lat. *juvenis*): an affected word of the time.

103. *Ninus' tomb*. Ninus was a legendary King of Assyria, to whom the foundation of Nineveh was attributed. Pyramus was a Babylonian youth.

114. *Sometime*. Cp. II. i. 38.

125. *translated*. Cp. I. i. 191.

131. *ousel-cock*. An 'ousel' is a blackbird.

133. *throstle*, thrush.

138. *the plain-song cuckoo*: so called because of his unvarying note, 'plain-song' being the simple melody without variations.

141. *set his wit to*, match his wit against.

154. *gleek*, flout, scoff.

160. *Whe'r*, for 'whether'. Cp. II. ii. 156 n.

162. *still*, ever.

173. *apricocks and dewberries*, apricots and gooseberries.

178. *To have my love to bed, and to arise*, i. e. to conduct him to bed, and assist at his rising.

186. *I cry your worships mercy*, I pray your worships, pardon me.

189. *I shall desire you of more acquaintance*. 'Desire,' in this idiomatic phrase, means 'request', 'make a request to'. 'Of' means 'in the matter of'. The literal meaning, then, is this: 'I shall make a request to you in the matter of more acquaintance,' i. e. I shall ask you to let us be better acquainted. So *Merchant of Venice*, IV. i. 102: 'I humbly do desire your grace of pardon;' *As You Like It*, V. iv. 56: 'I desire you of the like,' &c.

194. *Squash*. A 'squash' is an unripe peascod.

209. *some enforced chastity*. 'Enforced' = violated. For the moon as the type and patroness of chastity, cp. II. i. 163 n.

ACT III, SCENE II. 3. *in extremity*, to excess.

5. *What night-rule now* . . . ? what rule for the night's diversions ?

9. *patches*, clowns, fools: so called from the professional jester's patched or motley coat. So 'a patched fool', IV. i. 216 below; 'a motley fool,' *As You Like It*, II. vii. 13.

*mechanicals*, mechanics.

13. *that barren sort*, that dull-witted crew. For 'sort' cp. I. 21.

14. *presented*. Cp. III. i. 65.

15. *enter'd in*. 'In' = into. Cp. *Richard II*, II. iii. 160: 'to enter in the castle;' *Merchant of Venice*, V. i. 55-6: 'Let the sounds of music Creep in our ears'; and the common phrase, 'fall in love.'

17. *nowl*, noddle.

21. *russet-pated choughs*, jackdaws with their greyish-coloured heads. *many in sort*, many in company. Cp. I. 13.



25. *at our stamp*, at the stamp of our footsteps running.

30. *Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch*. Commentators seem to find no difficulty in this line, for they say nothing about it. And yet several meanings could be extracted from it, no one more convincing than another. Let us take 'briers and thorns' of l. 29 to be the subject of 'catch', and the meaning is that while they catch some sleeves and some hats from the others, from those who give way ('yielders') they catch everything. Those who give way to the briers, instead of bursting through them, only become more completely entangled.

32. *translated*. Cp. III. i. 125.

36. *latch'd*, laid hold of, caught (OE. *laecan*).

40. *of force*, perforce.

41. *stand close*. 'Close' = out of sight, concealed.

53. *This whole earth*, i. e. solid, in one piece.

55. *Her brother's noontide*, i. e. the sun's.

71. *a worm*, a small snake. Cp. *Macbeth*, III. iv. 29: 'There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled,' &c.

74. *a mispris'd mood*, a mood or humour due to a misprision or mistake. 'Misprised' = mistaken; from Old French *mesprendre*, modern *méprendre*.

87. *his tender*, its offer (keeping up the financial figure). 'His' for 'its' was the common usage then; 'its' did not come in till later.

90. *misprision*. Cp. I. 74 above.

92-3. The meaning is: For one man who keeps faith, a million fail, breaking oath upon oath. For 'confound' = destroy, cp. v. i. 302, &c.

96. *fancy-sick*, love-sick. Cp. I. i. 155.

*cheer*, expression, countenance (ME. *chere*, the face).

100. *against she do appear*, in preparation for her appearance.

114. *their fond pageant*, the foolish spectacle they present.

119. *sport alone*, i. e. unrivalled sport.

124. *vows so born*, i. e. vows (being) so born.

128. *advance your cunning*, i. e. bring it into view.

133. *Will even weigh*, will weigh even.

141. *Taurus*: a high mountain-range in Asia Minor.

147. *If you were civil*, if you had decent or civilized manners. 'Civility' had a wider meaning then than now: namely, the refinement which civilized life implies.

160-1. *extort A poor soul's patience*, i. e. wring it from her, deprive her of it.

169. *I will none*, I will none of her. That is, I desire to have nothing to do with her.

175. *aby it dear*, pay dear for it. 'Aby' is from 'a-' = out, away, + 'buy', OE. *bycgan*.

188. *oes*, circles, orbs. Cp. *Antony and Cleopatra*, v. ii. 83: 'the little O, the Earth.'

195. *Injurious*, insulting. Cp. 'injury' in II. i. 147, and in II. 148, 219 of this scene. In each case the notion of 'insult' is uppermost. So with 'wrong', I. 361.

196. *contriv'd*, plotted.

203. *artificial*. We use this word always in the passive = created by art. Here it is active = creating by art. Cp. I. i. 184 ('tuneable').

204. *neelds*, needles: an old form.

213-14. 'Two of the first' = two bodies: referring to the order of the terms in the preceding line, viz. (1) 'bodies', (2) 'heart'. This was the technical method of reference in heraldry to the terms of a preceding description. We may then explain, with Douce: 'we had two bodies, like coats of heraldry belonging to man and wife (who are two bodies) as to one person, and having, like our one heart, one crest.'

215. *rent*, rend: an old form.

237. *persever*: read 'perséver'. So always in Shakespeare.

*sad*, grave, serious. This is the normal meaning of the word in Shakespeare. When he talks, as he does, of 'sad' or 'sad-ey'd' justices and counsellors, we must not take him to mean that they were melancholy, but only that they were grave.

239. *hold the sweet jest up*, i.e. keep the jest up.

240. *well carried*, well managed.

242. *Such an argument*, a subject for such treatment. 'Argument' is used in its original Latin sense of theme, subject-matter, or business in hand. Cp. *Henry V*, III. i. 21, where it is said of the English that they 'sheathed their swords for lack of argument', i.e. for lack of matter to fight about.

257. *Ethiop*, Ethiopian, black-a-moor.

257-8. *No, no, he'll . . . Seem to break loose*. Hermia has laid hold of Lysander to detain him. Demetrius begins to address her, and then breaks off to taunt Lysander with only pretending to break loose, insinuating that he has no great desire to fight.

272. *what news?* i.e. what new thing has happened?

274. *erewhile*, a short time ago.

290. *Compare*, comparison.

300. *curst*, shrewish. So II. 341, 439. 'Curst' is the literal meaning of 'shrewd', whence 'shrewish', 'shrewishness'. (Cp. II. i. 33, and I. 323 below).

310. *your stealth*, your stealing away. So IV. i. 166.

317. *fond*. Cp. II. ii. 88.

323. *shrewd*, shrewish, with a biting tongue. Cp. I. 300 n.

329. *minimus*: anything very small, from Lat. *minimus*, smallest.

*hinderer knot-grass*. Knot-grass was thought to check the growth of children. Cp. 'put him into a strait pair of gaskins, 'twere worse

than knot-grass: he would never grow after it' (Beaumont and Fletcher, *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, II. ii).

335. *aby*. Cp. III. ii. 175.

338. *cheek by jole*, cheek by jowl (jaw), i. e. close alongside.

339. *coil*, turmoil.

341. *curst*. Cp. I. 300.

352. *sort*, turn out.

356. *welkin*, sky (OE. *wolcen*, cloud).

*anon*, forthwith.

357. *Acheron*, a river of hell, according to the ancients.

361. *wrong*, insult. Cp. 'injury', III. ii. 195 n.

367. *virtuous property*. The 'virtue' of a thing, in one sense of the word, is that for which it is efficacious. This is the sense of 'virtue' in 'virtuous' here.

368. *his*, for 'its'. Cp. I. 87.

380. *Aurora's harbinger*. Aurora was the goddess of the dawn, and her harbinger the morning star.

382-3. Suicides were buried at cross-roads, with a stake through their hearts. They and the drowned were thought by the ancients to roam about for a certain number of years because they had not been properly buried.

439. *curst*. Cp. I. 300.

ACT IV, SCENE I. 2. *amiable*, lovable, lovely (Lat. *amabilis*).

*coy*, play coyly with, caress.

17. *overflown*, overflowed, and so drowned. So in *Titus Andronicus*, III. i. 230: 'overflow'd and drown'd.'

20. *neaf*, fist. Still used in Scots dialect.

25. *Cavalery*, Cavalero or Cavalier.

38. *a bottle of hay*, a bundle of hay: a term now mainly in local use.

45. *exposition*, for 'disposition', probably.

47. *be all ways away*, get away in all directions.

48. The 'woodbine' and the 'honeysuckle' being properly the same, this line has caused difficulty. But 'woodbine' was and is rather loosely used for several climbing plants, of which the honeysuckle is one.

49. *the female ivy*: 'female', because regarded as 'married to the elm'.

60. *orient pearls*. 'Orient,' from meaning (as it still does) 'from the East', 'from the quarter of the rising sun', came to mean 'bright', 'shining', as here. So 'an orient drop' (a tear), in *Venus and Adonis*, l. 981, and 'orient colours' in Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 546.

72. *the other*, the others. 'Other' is an older plural.

73. *May all*, i.e. they may all.

79. *Dian's bud . . . Cupid's flower*. 'Dian's bud' may be the bud of the *Agnus castus*, or the tree of Holy Chastity, a branch of which is borne by Diana, the Goddess of Chastity, in the Chaucerian poem, *The Flower and the Leaf*, l. 173. Cupid's flower is 'love-in-idleness', the pansy or heartsease, mentioned II. i. 168.

101. *sad*. Cp. III. ii. 237.

110. *observation*, observance (i.e. of May morning.) Cp. I. i. 167.

111. *vaward*, vanguard. In *Henry V*, IV. iii. 130, &c., it is used in its literal sense, of the vanguard of an army.

118. *Hercules . . . Cadmus*. Cadmus was the founder of Thebes, in Boeotia. The chronology which places Cadmus, Hercules, and Hippolyta together is loose: but such points are of no importance here.

120. *hounds of Sparta*. Spartan hounds were famous among the ancients for speed and scent.

121. *chiding*: used of echoing noises, where the one noise seems to rebuke the other.

126. *flew'd*. The 'flews' of a hound are its chaps.  
*so sanded*, of such a sandy colour.

128. *dew-lapp'd*. Cp. II. i. 50.

129-30. *match'd . . . Each under each*, i.e. their notes arranged in a scale.

130. *tuneable*, tuneful. Cp. I. i. 184.

140. *our solemnity*, the festivities preparatory to the solemnization of their marriage. So I. i. 11.

145-6. On Saint Valentine's Day (Feb. 14) birds begin to couple and the sexes choose their mates.

152. *amazedly*, confusedly, like one not master of his senses. The word 'amazement' had a stronger meaning then than now. It implied distraction, and sometimes even horror.

159. *Without the peril*, &c., i.e. outside, beyond its reach.

160. *You have enough*, i.e. enough to convict him: addressed to Theseus.

166. *their stealth*. Cp. III. i. 310.

169. *fancy*, love. Cp. I. i. 155, &c.

173. *gaud*. Cp. I. i. 33 (gawd).

195-6. *Methinks I see with parted eye*, &c., i.e. with parted eyes. Her eyes, it seems to Hermia, do not work together, but each sees independently, apart from the other. Consequently everything seems double.

216. *a patched fool*, a motley fool (from the patched or motley dress which a jester wore). Cp. III. ii. 9.

226. *I shall sing it at her death*: probably, at Thisbe's death.

ACT IV, SCENE II. 4. *transported*, i.e. removed from this world to the next.

20. *bully Bottom*. Cp. III. i. 7.

20-1. *sixpence a day*, &c., i.e. in pension : possibly alluding to some contemporary pensioned actor.

37. *good strings to your beards*, i.e. to tie on their false beards.

39. *preferred*, recommended for acceptance. Cp. *Julius Caesar*, v. v. 62 : 'Ay, if Messala will prefer me to you' (i.e. recommend me to you to be your servant).

ACT V, SCENE I. 1. *that*, that which.

2. *may*, can. Cp. II. i. 161 *n*.

8. *compact*, composed, lit. fastened or bound together.

11. *Helen's beauty*. Helen of Greece, the most beautiful woman of antiquity. She was carried off from her husband by Paris the Trojan. The result was the war between Greece and Troy, celebrated in the *Iliad*.

*a brow of Egypt*, i.e. a dark, gipsy brow.

26. *constancy*, consistency.

27. *admirable*, to be wondered at, marvellous : the original Latin sense (*admirari*, to wonder ; *admirabilis*). So the verb 'admire,' e.g. in *The Tempest*, v. i. 154 : 'these lords At this encounter do so much admire' (i.e. marvel); and *Macbeth*, III. iv. 110 : 'with most admired disorder' (where 'admired' = marvelled-at).

32. *masques*. Masques or pageants were in great favour in Shakespeare's time, especially at courtly and noble festivities. What they were like may be seen from the masque in *The Tempest*, IV. i. 60 f.

34. *after-supper* : the last course of supper, called the rere-supper.

39. *abridgment*, epitome of life, or life in little ; that is, a drama, a play. It was a technical term. Cp. *Hamlet*, II. ii. 448, 'look where my abridgments come : ' said by Hamlet as the players enter. It is in this sense that in l. 555 of the same scene he describes the players as 'the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time'.

42. *brief*, short list or programme.

*ripe*, i.e. ready for performance.

44. *The battle with the Centaurs*. The Centaurs were a fabulous race, half man, half horse. They became outrageous at a certain marriage-feast to which they were invited—the feast of the Lapithae,—and were only routed by Hercules (mentioned in l. 47).

48-9. The 'Thracian singer' is Orpheus, the mythical Greek poet and musician whose power in song was such that he could move trees and rocks, and tame wild beasts by it. He was torn alive on the Thracian hills by the mad devotees of the wine-god Bacchus.

52-3. *The thrice three Muses*, &c. Perhaps suggested by Spenser's *Tears of the Muses*, on the neglect of learning. See the discussion on p. xxvii of the Introduction.



59. The last three words of this line have defied emendation.

70. *The passion of loud laughter*. 'Passion' was then used of any violent commotion of the mind (from the original sense of 'suffering': Lat. *pator*, *passus sum*), and often, as here and in ll. 295, 323, of the outward expression of such emotion. Cp. especially *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, iv. iv. 172: 'Twas Ariadne passioning For Theseus' injury.' The emotion is usually one of grief, and its use here, of laughter, is exceptional.

73. *Which*. 'Which' was then used in all three genders.

74. *unbreath'd*, i. e. unexercised.

90. *take*, take the meaning of. Cp. II. ii. 46.

91-2. The metre is defective. The meaning is that in such a case noble respect or consideration judges the performance, not by its merit, but by the effort which is made to please.

93. *Great clerks*, great scholars (*clerici*, because at one time learning was almost confined to the clergy).

96. *periods*, full stops.

106. *address'd*, ready, prepared. Cp. 2 *Henry IV*, iv. iv. 5: 'Our navy is addressed.'

118. *doth not stand upon points*. There is a play here upon two meanings: (1) is not very punctilious about what he says; and (2) does not mind his stops. The Prologue's neglect of punctuation has made him say the opposite of what was intended.

120. *the stop*. A pun: see previous note.

125. *recorder*, a kind of flute or flageolet.

*not in government*. This phrase may be explained by the following passage in *Hamlet*, III. ii. 373 f.: 'Will you play upon this pipe? . . . 'Tis as easy as lying; govern these ventages [i. e. wind-holes] with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music.'

132. *certain*: a favourite word with the old ballad-makers, to fill up the line.

140. *Ninus*. Cp. III. i. 103.

141. *hight*, called (OE. *hātan*): common in old writers, and here an intentional archaism, like 'certain' above.

144. *fall*, let fall. Cp. *Tempest*, II. i. 304: 'Mine eyes, even sociable to the show of thine, Fall fellowly drops.'

148-9. This is written in ridicule of the excessive alliteration practised by the minor poets of the day.

157. *interlude*. Cp. I. ii. 5.

164. *sinister*, left: the original Latin sense.

184. *sensible*, capable of sensation.

200-1. *Limander* . . . *Helen*. 'Limander' is for Leander; and 'Helen', probably, for Hero. The story of Leander, who nightly swam the Hellespont to meet his sweetheart Hero, and was at last

drowned there, was well known from Marlowe's poem of *Hero and Leander*. Rosalind makes fun of it in *As You Like It*, iv. i. 97 f.

202. *Shafalus . . . Procrus*. For Cephalus and Procris. Cephalus was a Thessalian prince, and Procris, an Athenian princess, was his wife. He shot her by mistake while hunting, and when she died he committed suicide.

207. 'Tide: for 'betide'.

210. *mural*: from Lat. *murus*, a wall. On this reading see Introd. p. xxx.

229. *lion-fell*, a lion's skin.

231. 'twere pity on my life. Cp. iii. i. 45.

252. *The greatest error of all the rest*. It is usual to quote for this construction Milton's *Paradise Lost*, iv. 323-4: 'Adam the goodliest man of men since born His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.' It is a confusion of 'greatest of all' and 'greater than all the rest'

256. *in snuff*. A pun on the phrase 'to be in snuff' = to be offended.

293. *thrum*: the loose end of weavers' threads. The three Fates were supposed to superintend the thread of life.

294. *quell*, destroy. In *Macbeth*, i. vii. 72, it occurs as a noun: 'who shall bear the guilt Of our great quell' (viz. the murder of Duncan).

295. *passion*. Cp. i. 70 n.

297. *Beshrew*, curse, a plague upon: used playfully. Cp. ii. ii. 54.

301. *cheer*, cheerfulness.

302. *confound*. Cp. iii. ii. 93.

314 f. They pun. 'Die' the vb. suggests 'die' the sing. of 'dice', which suggests 'ace', which in l. 319 suggests 'ass'.

320. *How chance*, &c. Cp. i. i. 129.

323. *passion*. Cp. i. 70 n.

326-7. *which Pyramus, which Thisbe is the better*, whether Pyramus or whether Thisbe is the better. 'Which' here seems to be 'used for the kindred "whether"' (Abbott).

344. *Sisters Three*. These are the Fates of l. 292.

352. *imbrue*, make bloody, shed the blood of. Cp. 2 *Henry IV*, ii. iv. 210: 'What? Shall we have incision? Shall we imbrue?'

361. *a Bergomask dance*. 'A rustic dance, framed in imitation of the people of Bergamasco, a province in the state of Venice, who are ridiculed as being more clownish in their manners and dialect than any other people in Italy' (Nares).

376. *palpable-gross*, palpably gross.

ACT V, SCENE II. 4. *fordone*, exhausted: 'for-' is intensive.

5. *wasted*: simply = consumed. Cp. ii. i. 57 n.

14. *the triple Hecate*: the 'thrice crowned queen of night' of *As You Like It*, iii. ii. 2, who, under her three names of Phoebe, Diana, and

Hecate, was respectively the moon goddess in heaven, the virgin huntress-goddess on earth, and goddess of the dark underworld.

35. *create*, created. So in l. 45, 'consecrate', for 'consecrated'.

42. *prodigious*, monstrous, portentous (lit. of the nature of a 'prodigy').

46. *take his gait*, take his own way. Cp. 'go your gait'.

63-4. If we have the unmerited luck to escape being hissed.

68. *Give me your hands*, i. e. applaud. So 'lend me your ears', in Antony's famous speech (*Julius Caesar*, III. ii. 79), for 'listen'.



Description of Bottom  
Puck

" Lovers

" Theseus

### Description of Bottom

Bottom was a weaver who took the part of Pyramus in the play the tradesmen were putting on. One day while the play was being rehearsed Bottom appears with a donkey's head. By some magic potion on her eyelids Titania the queen of the fairies falls in love with him for a time. During his stay in fairy-land his nature is strongly shown for he would be superior to the fairies. He is full of vanity and conceit.

### Revenge of Winds

Thresh upon lands; overflowing rivers; ox does not work; ploughman does not plough; corn rotted; cows ate dead cattle; men morris filled with mud; no footstep on maze  
Seasons alter;





